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OF

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D. & LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,

AND CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF FRANCE.

VOLUME SIXTH.

NEW-YORK:

ROBERT CARTER,

58 Canal-street.

1840.

DISCOURSES

ON THE

APPLICATION OF CHRISTIANITY

TO THE

COMMERCIAL AND ORDINARY AFFAIRS OF LIFE.

BY

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D. & LL.D.

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PREFACE.

THIS volume can be regarded in no other light, than as the fragment of a subject far too extensive to be overtaken within a compass so narrow. There has only a partial survey been taken of the morality of the actions that are current among people engaged in merchandise; and with regard to the morality of the affections which stir in their hearts, and give a feverish and diseased activity to the pursuits of worldly ambition, this has scarcely been touched upon, save in a very general way in the Discourse on the love of Money.

And yet, in the estimation of every cultivated Christian, this second branch of the subject should be by far the most interesting,—as it relates to that spiritual discipline by which the love of the world is overcome; and by which all that oppressive anxiety is kept in check, which the reverses and uncertainties of business are so apt to inject into the bosom; and by which the appetite that urges him who hasteth to be rich is effectually restrained —so as to make it possible for a man to give his hand to the duties of his secular occupation, and,

at the same time, to maintain that sacredness of heart which becomes every fleeting traveller through a scene, all whose pleasures and whose prospects are so soon to pass away.

There are two questions of casuistry connected with this part of the subject, which would demand no small degree of consideration. The first relates to the degree in which an affection for present things, and present interests ought to be indulged. And the second is, whether, on the supposition that a desire after the good things of the present life were reduced down to the standard of the gospel, there would remain a sufficient impulse in the world for upholding its commerce, at the rate which would secure the greatest amount of comfort and subsistence to its families.

Without offering any demonstration, at present, upon this matter, we simply state it as our opinion, that, though the whole business of the world were in the hands of men thoroughly Christianized, and who, rating wealth according to its real dimensions on the high scale of eternity, were chastened out of all their idolatrous regards to it—yet would trade, in these circumstances, be carried to the extreme limit of its being really productive or desirable. An affection for riches, beyond what Christianity prescribes, is not essential to any extension of commerce that is at all valuable or legitimate; and, in opposition to the maxim, that

the spirit of enterprise is the soul of commercial prosperity, do we hold, that it is the excess of this spirit beyond the moderation of the New Testament, which, pressing on the natural boundaries of trade, is sure, at length, to visit every country, where it operates with the recoil of all those calamities, which, in the shape of beggared capitalists, and unemployed operatives, and dreary intervals of bankruptcy and alarm, are observed to follow a season of overdone speculation.

We have added seven Discourses to those which appeared in the original volume. In the selection of these, we have been guided by the consideration, that the duty of citizens, and the duty of Christian philanthropists, and more especially the duty of those who belong to the humbler classes of society, are at all times topics of pressing and peculiar interest, in those places where commerce has assembled together its masses of large and contiguous population. The Christianity which is all things to all men, can adapt its lessons to all the possible varieties of human life

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is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."—ROMANS iii. 9—19. 335

DISCOURSE I.

ON THE MERCANTILE VIRTUES WHICH MAY EXIST WITHOUT THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."—PHIL. iv. 8.

THE Apostle, in these verses, makes use of certain terms, without ever once proposing to advance any definition of their meaning. He presumes on a common understanding of this, between himself and the people whom he is addressing. He presumes that they know what is signified by Truth, and Justice, and Loveliness, and the other moral qualities which are included in the enumeration of our text. They, in fact, had words to express them, for many ages antecedent to the coming of Christianity into the world. Now, the very existence of the words proves, that, before the gospel was taught, the realities which they express must have existed also. These good and respectable attributes of character must have been occasionally exemplified by men, prior to the

religion of the New Testament. The virtuous and the praiseworthy must, ere the commencement of the new dispensation, have been met with in society—for the Apostle does not take them up in this passage, as if they were unknown and unheard of novelties—but such objects of general recognition, as could be understood on the bare mention of them, without warning and without explanation.

But more than this. These virtues must not only have been exemplified by men, previous to the entrance of the gospel amongst them—seeing that the terms, expressive of the virtues, were perfectly understood—but men must have known how to love and to admire them. How is it that we apply the epithet lovely to any moral qualification, but only in as far as that qualification does in fact draw towards it a sentiment of love? How is it that another qualification is said to be of good report, but in as far as it has received from men an applauding or an honourable testimony? The Apostle does not bid his readers have respect to such things as are lovely, and then, for the purpose of saving them from error, enumerate what the things are which he conceives to possess this qualification. He commits the matter, with perfect confidence, to their own sense and their own apprehension. He bids them bear a respect to whatsoever things are lovely—nor does he seem at all suspicious, that, by so doing, he leaves them in any darkness or uncertainty about the precise import of the advice which he is delivering. He therefore recognises the competency of men to estimate the lovely and the honourable of charac-

ter. He appeals to a tribunal in their own breasts, and evidently supposes, that, antecedently to the light of the Christian revelation, there lay scattered among the species certain principles of feeling and of action, in virtue of which, they both occasionally exhibited what was just, and true, and of good report, and also could render to such an exhibition the homage of their regard and of their reverence. At present we shall postpone the direct enforcement of these virtues upon the observation of Christians, and shall confine our thoughts of them to the object of estimating their precise importance and character, when they are realized by those who are not Christians.

While we assert with zeal every doctrine of Christianity, let us not forget that there is a zeal without discrimination; and that, to bring such a spirit to the defence of our faith, or of any one of its peculiarities, is not to vindicate the cause, but to discredit it. Now, there is a way of maintaining the utter depravity of our nature, and of doing it in such a style of sweeping and of vehement asseveration, as to render it not merely obnoxious to the taste, but obnoxious to the understanding. On this subject there is often a roundness and a temerity of announcement, which any intelligent man, looking at the phenomena of human character with his own eyes, cannot go along with; and thus it is, that there are injudicious defenders of orthodoxy, who have mustered against it not merely a positive dislike, but a positive strength of observation and argument. Let the nature of man be a ruin, as it certainly is, it is obvious to the most

common discernment, that it does not offer one unvaried and unalleviated mass of deformity. There are certain phases, and certain exhibitions of this nature which are more lovely than others —certain traits of character, not due to the operation of Christianity at all, and yet calling forth our admiration and our tenderness—certain varieties of moral complexion, far more fair and more engaging than certain other varieties; and to prove that the gospel may have had no share in the formation of them, they in fact stood out to the notice and respect of the world, before the gospel was ever heard of. The classic page of antiquity sparkles with repeated exemplifications of what is bright and beautiful in the character of man; nor do all its descriptions of external nature waken up such an enthusiasm of pleasure, as when it bears testimony to some graceful or elevated doing out of the history of the species. And whether it be the kindliness of maternal affection, or the unweariedness of filial piety, or the constancy of tried and unalterable friendship, or the earnestness of devoted patriotism, or the rigour of unbending fidelity, or any other of the recorded virtues, which shed a glory over the remembrance of Greece and of Rome—we fully concede it to the admiring scholar, that they one and all of them were sometimes exemplified in those days of heathenism; and that, out of the materials of a period, crowded as it was with moral abominations, there may also be gathered things which are pure, and lovely, and true, and just, and honest, and of good report.

What do we mean, then, it may be asked, by

the universal depravity of man? How shall we reconcile the admission now made, with the unqualified and authoritative language of the Bible, when it tells us of the totality and the magnitude of human corruption? Wherein lies that desperate wickedness, which is every where ascribed to all the men of all the families that be on the face of the earth? And how can such a tribute of acknowledgment be awarded to the sages and the patriots of antiquity, who yet, as the partakers of our fallen nature, must be outcasts from the favour of God, and have the character of evil stamped upon the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts continually.

In reply to these questions, let us speak to your own experimental recollections on a subject in which you are aided both by the consciousness of what passes within you, and by your observation of the character of others. Might not a sense of honour elevate that heart which is totally unfurnished with a sense of God? Might not an impulse of compassionate feeling be sent into that bosom which is never once visited by a movement of duteous loyalty towards the Lawgiver in heaven? Might not occasions of intercourse with the beings around us, develop whatever there is in our nature of generosity, and friendship, and integrity, and patriotism; and yet the unseen Being, who placed us in this theatre, be neither loved, nor obeyed, nor listened to? Amid the manifold varieties of human character, and the number of constitutional principles which enter into its composition, might there not be an

individual in whom the constitutional virtues so blaze forth and have the ascendancy, as to give a general effect of gracefulness to the whole of this moral exhibition; and yet, may not that individual be as unmindful of his God, as if the principles of his constitution had been mixed up in such a different proportion, as to make him an odious and a revolting spectacle? In a word, might not Sensibility shed forth its tears, and Friendship perform its services, and Liberality impart of its treasure, and Patriotism earn the gratitude of its country, and Honour maintain itself entire and untainted, and all the softenings of what is amiable, and all the glories of what is chivalrous and manly, gather into one bright effulgency of moral accomplishment on the person of him who never, for a single day of his life, subordinates one habit, or one affection, to the will of the Almighty; who is just as careless and as unconcerned about God, as if the native tendencies of his constitution had compounded him into a monster of deformity; and who just as effectually realizes this attribute of rebellion against his Maker, as the most loathsome and profligate of the species, that he walks in the counsel of his own heart, and after the sight of his own eyes?

The same constitutional variety may be seen on the lower fields of creation. You there witness the gentleness of one animal, the affectionate fidelity of another, the cruel and unrelenting ferocity of a third; and you never question the propriety of the language, when some of these instinctive tendencies are better reported of than

others; or when it is said of the former of them, that they are the more fine, and amiable, and endearing. But it does not once occur to you, that, even in the very best of these exhibitions, there is any sense of God, or that the great master-principle of his authority is at all concerned in it. Transfer this contemplation back again to our species; and under the same complexional difference of the more and the less lovely, or the more and the less hateful, you will perceive the same utter insensibility to the consideration of a God, or the same utter inefficiency on the part of his law to subdue human habits and human inclinations. It is true, that there is one distinction between the two cases; but it all goes to aggravate the guilt and the ingratitude of man. He has an understanding which the inferior animals have not—and yet, with this understanding, does he refuse practically to acknowledge God. He has a conscience, which they have not—and yet, though it whisper in the ear of his inner man the claims of an unseen Legislator, does he lull away his time in the slumbers of indifference, and live without him in the world.

Or go to the people of another planet, over whom the hold of allegiance to their Maker is unbroken —in whose hearts the Supreme sits enthroned, and throughout the whole of whose history there runs the perpetual and the unfailing habit of subordination to his law. It is conceivable, that with them too, there may be varieties of temper and of natural inclination, and yet all of them be under the effective control of one great and imperious

principle; that, in subjection to the will of God, every kind and every honourable disposition is cherished to the uttermost; and that in subjection to the same will, every tendency to anger, and malignity, and revenge, is repressed at the first moment of its threatened operation; and that, in this way, there will be the fostering of a constant encouragement given to the one set of instincts, and the struggling of a constant opposition made against the other. Now, only conceive this great bond of allegiance to be dissolved; the mighty and subordinating principle, which wont to wield an ascendancy over every movement and every affection, to be loosened and done away; and then would this loyal, obedient world become what ours is—independent of Christianity. Every constitutional desire would run out, in the unchecked spontaneity of its own movements. The law of heaven would furnish no counteraction to the impulses and the tendencies of nature. And tell us, in these circumstances, when the restraint of religion was thus lifted off, and all the passions let out to take their own tumultuous and independent career—tell us, if, though amid the uproar of the licentious and vindictive propensities, there did gleam forth at times some of the finer and the lovelier sympathies of nature—tell us, if this would at all affect the state of that world as a state of enmity against God; where his will was reduced to an element of utter insignificancy; where the voice of their rightful master fell powerless on the consciences of a listless and alienated family; where humour, and interest, and propensity—at one time

selfish, and at another social—took their alternate sway over those hearts from which there was excluded all effectual sense of an overruling God? If he be unheeded and disowned by the creatures whom he has formed, can it be said to alleviate the deformity of their rebellion, that they, at times, experience the impulse of some amiable feeling which he hath implanted, or at times hold out some beauteousness of aspect which he hath shed over them? Shall the value or the multitude of the gifts release them from their loyalty to the giver; and when nature puts herself into the attitude of indifference or hostility against him, how is it that the graces and the accomplishments of nature can be pled in mitigation of her antipathy to him, who invested nature with all her graces, and upholds her in the display of all her accomplishments?

The way, then, to assert the depravity of man, is to fasten on the radical element of depravity, and to show how deeply it lies incorporated with his moral constitution. It is not by an utterance of rash and sweeping totality to refuse him the possession of what is kind in sympathy, or of what is dignified in principle—for this were in the face of all observation. It is to charge him direct with his utter disloyalty to God. It is to convict him of treason against the majesty of heaven. It is to press home upon him the impiety of not caring about God. It is to tell him, that the hourly and habitual language of his heart is, I will not have the Being who made me to rule over me. It is to go to the man of honour, and, while we frankly award it to him that his pulse beats high in the

pride of integrity—it is to tell him, that he who keeps it in living play, and who sustains the loftiness of its movements, and who, in one moment of time, could arrest it for ever, is not in all his thoughts. It is to go to the man of soft and gentle emotions, and, while we gaze in tenderness upon him, it is to read to him, out of his own character, how the exquisite mechanism of feeling may be in full operation, while he who framed it is forgotten; while he who poured into his constitution the milk of human kindness, may never be adverted to with one single sentiment of veneration, or one single purpose of obedience; while he who gave him his gentler nature, who clothed him in all its adornments, and in virtue of whose appointment it is, that, instead of an odious and a revolting monster, he is the much loved child of sensibility, may be utterly disowned by him. In a word, it is to go round among all that Humanity has to offer in the shape of fair, and amiable, and engaging, and to prove how deeply Humanity has revolted against that Being who has done so much to beautify and exalt her. It is to prove that the carnal mind, under all its varied complexions of harshness or of delicacy, is enmity against God. It is to prove that, let nature be as rich as she may in moral accomplishments, and let the most favoured of her sons realize upon his own person the finest and the fullest assemblage of them—should he, at the moment of leaving this theatre of display, and bursting loose from the framework of mortality, stand in the presence of his Judge, and have the question put to him, What hast thou done unto

me? this man of constitutional virtue, with all the salutations he got upon earth, and all the reverence that he has left behind him, may, naked and defenceless, before Him who sitteth on the throne, be left without a plea and without an argument.

God's controversy with our species is not, that the glow of honour or of humanity is never felt among them. It is, that none of them understandeth, and none of them seeketh after God. It is, that He is deposed from his rightful ascendancy. It is, that He, who in fact inserted in the human bosom every one principle that can embellish the individual possessor, or maintain the order of society, is banished altogether from the circle of his habitual contemplations. It is, that man taketh his way in life as much at random, as if there was no presiding Divinity at all; and that, whether he at one time grovel in the depths of sensuality, or at another kindle with some generous movement of sympathy or of patriotism, he is at both times alike unmindful of Him to whom he owes his continuance and his birth. It is, that he moves his every footstep at his own will; and has utterly discarded, from its supremacy over him, the will of that invisible Master who compasses all his goings, and never ceases to pursue him by the claims of a resistless and legitimate authority. It is this which is the essential or the constituting principle of rebellion against God. This it is which has exiled the planet we live in beyond the limits of His favoured creation—and whether it be shrouded in the turpitude of licentiousness or cruelty, or occasionally brightened with the gleam

of the kindly and the honourable virtues, it is thus that it is seen as afar off, by Him who sitteth on the throne, and looketh on our strayed world, as athwart a wide and a dreary gulf of separation.

And when prompted by love towards His alienated children, He devised a way of recalling them —when willing to pass over all the ingratitude He had gotten from their hands, He reared a pathway of return, and proclaimed a pardon and a welcome to all who should walk upon it—when through the offered Mediator, who magnified His broken law, and upheld, by His mysterious sacrifice, the dignity of that government which the children of Adam had disowned, He invited all to come to Him and be saved—should this message be brought to the door of the most honourable man upon earth, and he turn in contempt and hostility away from it, has not that man posted himself more firmly than ever on the ground of rebellion? Though an unsullied integrity should rest upon all his transactions, and the homage of confidence and respect be awarded to him from every quarter of society, has not this man, by slighting the overtures of reconciliation, just plunged himself the deeper in the guilt of wilful and determined ungodliness? Has not the creature exalted itself above the Creator; and in the pride of those accomplishments, which never would have invested his person had not they come to him from above, has he not, in the act of resisting the gospel, aggravated the provocation of his whole previous defiance to the author of it?

Thus much for all that is amiable, and for all

that is manly, in the accomplishments of nature, when disjoined from the faith of Christianity. They take up a separate residence in the human character from the principle of godliness. Anterior to this religion, they go not to alleviate the guilt of our departure from the living God; and subsequently to this religion, they may blazon the character of him who stands out against it: but on the principles of a most clear and intelligent equity, they never can shield him from the condemnation and the curse of those who have neglected the great salvation.

The doctrine of the New Testament will bear to be confronted with all that can be met or noticed on the face of human society. And we speak most confidently, to the experience of many, when we say, that often, in the course of their manifold transactions, have they met the man, whom the bribery of no advantage whatever could seduce into the slightest deviation from the path of integrity—the man, who felt his nature within him put into a state of the most painful indignancy, at every thing that bore upon it the character of a sneaking or dishonourable artifice—the man, who positively could not be at rest under the consciousness that he had ever betrayed, even to his own heart, the remotest symptom of such an inclination—and whom, therefore, the unaided law of justice and of truth has placed on a high and deserved eminence in the walks of honourable merchandise.

Let us not withhold from this character the tribute of its most rightful admiration; but let us further ask, if, with all that he thus possessed of

native feeling and constitutional integrity, there was never observed in any such individual an utter emptiness of religion; and that God is not in all his thoughts; and that, when he does what happens to be at one with the will of the Lawgiver, it is not because he is impelled to it by a sense of its being the will of the Lawgiver, but because he is impelled to it by the working of his own instinctive sensibilities; and that, however fortunate, or however estimable these sensibilities are, they still consist with the habit of a mind that is in a state of total indifference about God? Have we never read in our own character, or in the observed character of others, that the claims of the Divinity may be entirely forgotten by the very man to whom society around him yield, and rightly yield, the homage of an unsullied and honourable reputation; that this man may have all his foundations in the world; that every security on which he rests, and every enjoyment upon which his heart is set, lieth on this side of death; that a sense of the coming day on which God is to enter into judgment with him, is, to every purpose of practical ascendancy, as good as expunged altogether from his bosom; that he is far in desire, and far in enjoyment, and far in habitual contemplation, away from that God who is not far from any one of us; that his extending credit, and his brightening prosperity, and his magnificent retreat from business, with all the splendour of its accommodations—that these are the futurities at which he terminates; and that he goes not in thought beyond them to that eternity, which, in the flight of a few little years, will absorb

all, and annihilate all? In a word, have we never observed the man, who, with all that was right in mercantile principle, and all that was open and unimpeachable in the habit of his mercantile transactions, lived in a state of utter estrangement from the concerns of immortality? who, in reference to God, persisted, from one year to another, in the spirit of a deep slumber? who, in reference to the man that tries to awaken him out of his lethargy, recoils, with the most sensitive dislike, from the faithfulness of his ministrations? who, in reference to the Book which tells him of his nakedness and his guilt, never consults it with one practical aim, and never tries to penetrate beyond that aspect of mysteriousness which it holds out to an undiscerning world? who attends not church, or attends it with all the lifelessness of a form? who reads not his Bible, or reads it in the discharge of a self-prescribed and unfruitful task? who prays not, or prays with the mockery of an unmeaning observation? and, in one word, who, while surrounded by all those testimonies which give to man a place of moral distinction among his fellows, is living in utter carelessness about God, and about all the avenues which lead to him?

Now, attend for a moment to what that is which the man has, and to what that is which he has not. He has an attribute of character which is in itself pure, and lovely, and honourable, and of good report. He has a natural principle of integrity; and under its impulse he may be carried forward to such fine exhibitions of himself, as are worthy of all admiration. It is very noble, when the simple

utterance of his word carries as much security along with it, as if he had accompanied that utterance by the signatures, and the securities, and the legal obligations, which are required of other men. It might tempt one to be proud of his species when he looks at the faith that is put in him by a distant correspondent, who, without one other hold of him than his honour, consigns to him the wealth of a whole flotilla, and sleeps in the confidence that it is safe. It is indeed an animating thought, amid the gloom of this world's depravity, when we behold the credit which one man puts in another, though separated by oceans and by continents; when he fixes the anchor of a sure and steady dependence on the reported honesty of one whom he never saw; when, with all his fears for the treachery of the varied elements, through which his property has to pass, he knows, that should it only arrive at the door of its destined agent, all his fears and all his suspicions may be at an end. We know nothing finer than such an act of homage from one human being to another, when perhaps the diameter of the globe is between them; nor do we think that either the renown of her victories, or the wisdom of her counsels, so signalizes the country in which we live, as does the honourable dealing of her merchants; that all the glories of British policy, and British valour, are far eclipsed by the moral splendour which British faith has thrown over the name and the character of our nation; nor has she gathered so proud a distinction from all the tributaries of her power, as she has done from the awarded confi-

dence of those men of all tribes, and colours, and languages, who look to our agency for the most faithful of all management, and to our keeping for the most unviolable of all custody.

There is no denying, then, the very extended prevalence of a principle of integrity in the commercial world; and he who has such a principle within him, has that to which all the epithets of our text may rightly be appropriated. But it is just as impossible to deny, that, with this thing which he has, there may be another thing which he has not. He may not have one duteous feeling of reverence which points upward to God. He may not have one wish, or one anticipation, which points forward to eternity. He may not have any sense of dependence on the Being who sustains him; and who gave him his very principle of honour, as part of that interior furniture which he has put into his bosom; and who surrounded him with the theatre on which he has come forward with the finest and most illustrious displays of it; and who set the whole machinery of his sentiment and action a-going; and can, by a single word of his power, bid it cease from the variety, and cease from the gracefulness, of its movements. In other words, he is a man of integrity, and yet he is a man of ungodliness. He is a man born for the confidence and the admiration of his fellows, and yet a man whom his Maker can charge with utter defection from all the principles of a spiritual obedience. He is a man whose virtues have blazoned his own character in time, and have upheld the interests of society, and yet a man who

has not, by one movement of principle, brought himself nearer to the kingdom of heaven, than the most profligate of the species. The condemnation, that he is an alien from God, rests upon him in all the weight of its unmitigated severity. The threat, that they who forget God shall be turned into hell, will, on the great day of its fell and sweeping operation, involve him among the wretched outcasts of eternity. That God from whom, while in the world, he withheld every due offering of gratitude, and remembrance, and universal subordination of habit and of desire, will show him to his face, how, under the delusive garb of such sympathies as drew upon him the love of his acquaintances, and of such integrities as drew upon him their respect and their confidence, he was in fact a determined rebel against the authority of heaven; that not one commandment of the law, in the true extent of its interpretation, was ever fulfilled by him; that the pervading principle of obedience to this law, which is love to God, never had its ascendancy over him; that the beseeching voice of the Lawgiver, so offended and so insulted —but who, nevertheless, devised in love a way of reconciliation for the guilty, never had the effect of recalling him; that, in fact, he neither had a wish for the friendship of God, nor cherished the hope of enjoying Him—and that, therefore, as he lived without hope, so he lived without God in the world; finding all his desire, and all his sufficiency, to be somewhere else, than in that favour which is better than life; and so, in addition to the curse of having continued not in all the words of the book of God's law to do

them, entailing upon himself the mighty aggravation of having neglected all the offers of His gospel.

We say, then, of this natural virtue, what our Saviour said of the virtue of the Pharisees, many of whom were not extortioners, as other men—that, verily, it hath its reward. When disjoined from a sense of God, it is of no religious estimation whatever; nor will it lead to any religious blessing, either in time or in eternity. It has, however, its enjoyments annexed to it, just as a fine taste has its enjoyments annexed to it; and in these is it abundantly rewarded. It is exempted from that painfulness of inward feeling which nature has annexed to every act of departure from honesty. It is sustained by a conscious sense of rectitude and elevation. It is gratified by the homage of society; the members of which are ever ready to award the tribute of acknowledgment to those virtues that support the interests of society. And, finally, it may be said, that prosperity, with some occasional variations, is the general accompaniment of that credit, which every man of undeviating justice is sure to draw around him. But what reward, will you tell us, is due to him on the great day of the manifestation of God's righteousness, when, in fact, he has done nothing unto God? What recompense can be awarded to him out of those books which are then to be opened, and in which he stands recorded as a man overcharged with the guilt of spiritual idolatry? How shall God grant unto him the reward of a servant, when the service of God was not the principle of his doings in the world; and when

neither the justice he rendered to others, nor the sensibility that he felt for them, bore the slightest character of an offering to his Maker?

But wherever the religious principle has taken possession of the mind, it animates these virtues with a new spirit; and when so animated, all such things as are pure, and lovely, and just, and true, and honest, and of good report, have a religious importance and character belonging to them. The text forms part of an epistle addressed to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which were at Philippi; and the lesson of the text is matter of direct and authoritative enforcement, on all who are saints in Christ Jesus, at the present day. Christianity, with the weight of its positive sanctions on the side of what is amiable and honourable in human virtue, causes such an influence to rest on the character of its genuine disciples, that, on the ground both of inflexible justice and ever-breathing charity, they are ever sure to leave the vast majority of the world behind them. Simplicity and godly sincerity form essential ingredients of that peculiarity by which they stand signalized in the midst of an ungodly generation. The true friends of the gospel, tremblingly alive to the honour of their Master's cause, blush for the disgrace that has been brought on it by men who keep its Sabbaths, and yield an ostentatious homage to its doctrines and its sacraments. They utterly disclaim all fellowship with that vile association of cant and of duplicity, which has sometimes been exemplified, to the triumph of the enemies of religion; and they both feel the solemn truth, and act on the

authority of the saying, that neither thieves, nor liars, nor extortioners, nor unrighteous persons, have any part in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

DISCOURSE II.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN AIDING AND AUGMENTING THE MERCANTILE VIRTUES.

"For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men."—Rom. xiv. 18.

We have already asserted the natural existence of such principles in the heart of man, as lead him to many graceful and to many honourable exhibitions of character. We have further asserted, that this formed no deduction whatever from that article of orthodoxy which affirms the utter depravity of our nature; that the essence of this depravity lies in man having broken loose from the authority of God, and delivered himself wholly up to the guidance of his own inclinations; that though some of these inclinations are in themselves amiable features of human character, and point in their effects to what is most useful to human society, yet devoid as they all are of any reference to the will and to the rightful sovereignty of the Supreme Being, they could not avert, or even so much as alleviate, that charge of ungodliness, which may be fully carried round amongst all the sons and daughters of the species; that they furnish not the materials of any valid or satisfactory answer to the question, "What hast thou done unto God?" and that whether they are the desires of a native rectitude, or the desires of an instinctive benevo-

lence, they go not to purge away the guilt of having no love, and no care, for the Being who formed and who sustains us.

But what is more. If the virtues and accomplishments of nature are at all to be admitted into the controversy between God and man, instead of forming any abatement upon the enormity of our guilt, they stamp upon it the reproach of a still deeper and more determined ingratitude. Let us conceive it possible, for a moment, that the beautiful personifications of Scripture were all realized; that the trees of the forest clapped their hands unto God, and that the isles were glad at His presence; that the little hills shouted on every side, and the valleys covered over with corn sent forth their notes of rejoicing; that the sun and the moon praised Him, and the stars of light joined in the solemn adoration; that the voice of glory to God was heard from every mountain and from every waterfall, and that all nature, animated throughout by the consciousness of a pervading and a presiding Deity, burst into one loud and universal song of gratulation. Would not a strain of greater loftiness be heard to ascend from those regions where the all-working God had left the traces of His own immensity, than from the tamer and the humbler scenery of an ordinary landscape? Should not we look for a gladder acclamation from the fertile field, than from the arid waste, where no character of grandeur made up for the barrenness that was around us? Would not the goodly tree, compassed about with the glories of its summer foliage, lift up an anthem of louder

gratitude, than the lowly shrub that grew beneath it? Would not the flower, from whose leaves every hue of loveliness was reflected, send forth a sweeter rapture than the russet weed, which never drew the eye of any admiring passenger? And, in a word, wherever we saw the towering eminences of nature, or the garniture of her more rich and beauteous adornments, would it not be there that we looked for the deepest tones of devotion, or there for the tenderest and most exquisite of its melodies?

There is both the sublime of character, and the beauteous of character, exemplified upon man. We have the one in that high sense of honour, which no interest and no terror can seduce from any of its obligations. We have the other in that kindliness of feeling, which one look or one sigh of imploring distress can touch into liveliest sympathy. Only grant, that we have nothing either in the constitution of our spirits, or in the structure of our bodies, which we did not receive; and that mind, with all its varieties, is as much the product of a creating hand, as matter in all its modifications; and then, on the face of human society, do we witness all the gradations of a moral scenery, which may be directly referred to the operation of Him who worketh all in all. It is our belief, that, as to any effectual sense of God, there is as deep a slumber throughout the whole of this world's living and rational generations, as there is throughout all the diversities of its mute and unconscious materialism; and that to make our alienated spirits again alive unto the Father

of them, calls for as distinct and as miraculous an exertion of the Divinity, as would need to be put forth in the act of turning stones into the children of Abraham. Conceive this to be done then—and that a quickening and a realizing sense of the Deity pervaded all the men of our species—and that each knew how to refer his own endowments, with an adequate expression of gratitude to the unseen author of them—from whom, we ask, of all these various individuals, should we look for the halleluiahs of devoutest ecstasy? Would it not be from him whom God had arrayed in the splendour of nature's brightest accomplishments? Would it not be from him, with whose constitutional feelings the movements of honour and benevolence were in fullest harmony? Would it not be from him whom his Maker had cast into the happiest mould, and attempered into sweetest unison with all that was kind, and generous, and lovely, and ennobled by the loftiest emotions, and raised above his fellows into the finest spectacle of all that was graceful, and all that was manly? Surely, if the possession of these moralities be just another theme of acknowledgment to the Lord of the spirits of all flesh, then, if the acknowledgment be withheld, and these moralities have taken up their residence in the bosom of him who is utterly devoid of piety, they go to aggravate the reproach of his ingratitude; and to prove, that, of all the men upon earth who are far from God, he stands at the widest distance, he remains proof against the weightiest claims, and he, of the dead in trespasses and sins,

is the most profoundly asleep to the call of religion, and to the supremacy of its righteous obligations.

It is by argument such as this, that we would attempt to convince of sin those who have a righteousness that is without godliness; and to prove, that, with the possession of such things as are pure, and lovely, and honest, and of good report, they in fact can only be admitted to reconciliation with God, on the same footing with the most worthless and profligate of the species; and to demonstrate, that they are in the very same state of need and of nakedness, and are therefore children of wrath, even as others; that it is only through faith in the preaching of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that they can be saved; and that, unless brought down from the delusive eminency of their own conscious attainments, they take their forgiveness through the blood of the Redeemer, and their sanctification through the Spirit which is at His giving, they shall obtain no part in that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away.

But the gospel of Jesus Christ does something more than hold out a refuge to the guilty. It takes all those who accept of its overtures under its supreme and exclusive direction. It keeps by them in the way of counsel, and exhortation, and constant superintendence. The grace which it reveals, is a grace which not merely saves all men, but which teaches all men. He who is the proposed Saviour, also claims to be the alone master of those who put their trust in Him. His cogniz-

ance extends itself over the whole line of their history; and there is not an affection of their heart, or a deed of their visible conduct, over which He does not assert the right of an authority that is above all control, and that refuses all rivalship.

Now, we want to point attention to a distinction which obtains between one set and another set of His requirements. By the former, we are enjoined to practise certain virtues, which, separately from His injunction altogether, are in great demand, and in great reverence, amongst the members of society —such as compassion, and generosity, and justice, and truth; which, independently of the religious sanction they obtain from the law of the Saviour, are in themselves so lovely, and so honourable, and of such good report, that they are ever sure to carry general applause along with them, and thus to combine both the characteristics of our text— that he who in these things serveth Christ, is both acceptable to God, and approved of men.

But there is another set of requirements, where the will of God, instead of being seconded by the applause of men, is utterly at variance with it. There are some who can admire the generous sacrifices that are made to truth or to friendship, but who, without one opposing scruple, abandon themselves to all the excesses of riot and festivity, and are therefore the last to admire the puritanic sobriety of him whom they cannot tempt to put his chastity or his temperance away from him; though the same God, who bids us lie not one to another, also bids us keep the body under subjection, and to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the

soul. Again, there are some in whose eyes an unvitiated delicacy looks a beauteous and an interesting spectacle, and an undeviating self-control looks a manly and respectable accomplishment; but who have no taste in themselves, and no admiration in others, for the more direct exercises of religion; and who positively hate the strict and unbending preciseness of those who join in every ordinance, and on every returning night celebrate the praises of God in their family; and that, though the heavenly Lawgiver, who tells us to live righteously and soberly, tells us also to live godly in the present evil world. And lastly, there are some who have not merely a toleration, but a liking for all the decencies of an established observation; but who, with the homage they pay to sabbaths and to sacraments, nauseate the Christian principle in the supreme and regenerating vitality of its influences; who, under a general religiousness of aspect, are still in fact the children of the world—and therefore hate the children of light in all that is peculiar and essentially characteristic of that high designation; who understand not what is meant by having our conversation in heaven: and utter strangers to the separated walk, and the spiritual exercises, and the humble devotedness, and the consecrated affections, of the new creature in Jesus Christ, shrink from them altogether as from the extravagancies of a fanaticism in which they have no share, and with which they can have no sympathy—and all this, though the same scripture which prescribes the exercises of household and of public religion, lays claim to an undivided authority over all the desires

and affections of the soul; and will admit of no compromise between God and the world; and insists upon an utter deadness to the one, and a most vehement sensibility to the other; and elevates the standard of loyalty to the Father of our Spirits, to the lofty pitch of loving Him with all our strength, and of doing all things to His glory.

Let these examples serve to impress a real and experimental distinction which obtains between two sets of virtues; between those which possess the single ingredient of being approved by God, while they want the ingredient of being also acceptable unto men—and those which possess both these ingredients, and to the observance of which, therefore, we may be carried by a regard to the will of God, without any reference to the opinion of men—or by a regard to the opinion of men, without any reference to the will of God. Among the first class of virtues we would assign a foremost place to all those inward and spiritual graces which enter into the obedience of the affections—highly approved of God, but not at all acceptable to the general taste, or carrying along with them the general congeniality of the world. And then, though they do not possess the ingredient of God's approbation in a way so separate and unmixed, we would say, that abstinence from profane language, and attendance upon church, and a strict keeping of the sabbath, and the exercises of family worship, and the more rigid degrees of sobriety, and a fearful avoidance of every encroachment on temperance or chastity, rank more appropriately with the first than with

the second class of virtues; for though there be many in society who have no religion, and yet to whom several of these virtues are acceptable, yet we must allow, that they do not convey such a universal popularity along with them, as certain other virtues which belong indisputably to the second class. These are the virtues which have a more obvious and immediate bearing on the interest of society—such as the truth which is punctual to all its engagements, and the honour which never disappoints the confidence it has inspired, and the compassion which cannot look unmoved at any of the symptoms of human wretchedness, and the generosity which scatters unsparingly around it. These are virtues which God has enjoined, and in behalf of which man lifts the testimony of a loud and ready admiration—virtues in which there is a meeting and a combining of both the properties of our text; so that he who in these things serveth Christ, is both approved of God, and acceptable unto men.

Let a steady hold be kept of this distinction, and it will be found capable of being turned to a very useful application, both to the object of illustrating principle, and to the important object of detecting character. For this purpose, let us carry the distinction along with us, and make it subservient to the establishment of two or three successive observations.

First. A man may possess, to a considerable extent, the second class of virtues, and not possess so much as one iota of the religious principle; and that, among other reasons, because a man may feel

a value for one of the attributes which belongs to this class of virtues, and have no value whatever for the other attribute. If justice be both approved by God, and acceptable to men, he may, on the latter property alone, be induced to the strictest maintenance of this virtue—and that without suffering its former property to have any practical influence whatever on any of his habits, or any of his determinations: and the same with every other virtue belonging to this second class. As residing in his character, there may not be the ingredient of godliness in any one of them. He may be well reported on account of them by men; but with God he may lie under as fearful a severity of reckoning, as if he wanted them altogether. Surely, it does not go to alleviate the withdrawment of your homage from God, that you have such an homage to the opinion of men, as influences you to do things, to the doing of which the law of God is not able to influence you. It cannot be said to palliate the revolting of your inclinations from the Creator, that you have transferred them all to the creature; and given an ascendancy to the voice of human reputation, which you have refused to the voice and authority of your Lawgiver in heaven. Your want of subordination to Him is surely not made up by the respectful subordination that you render to the taste or the judgment of society. And in addition to this, we would have you to remember, that though other constitutional principles, besides a regard to the opinion of others, helped to form the virtues of the second class upon your character; though compassion,

and generosity, and truth, would have broken out into full and flourishing display upon you, and that, just because you had a native sensibility, or a native love of rectitude; yet, if the first ingredient be wanting, if a regard to the approbation of God have no share in the production of the moral accomplishment—then all the morality you can pretend to, is of as little religious estimation, and is as utterly disconnected with the rewards of religion, as all the elegance of taste you can pretend to, or all the raptured love of music you can pretend to, or all the vigour and dexterity of bodily exercise you can pretend to. All these, in reference to the great question of immortality, profit but little; and it is godliness alone that is profitable unto all things. It is upon this consideration that we would have you to open your eyes to the nakedness of your condition in the sight of God; to look to the full weight of the charge that He may prefer against you; to estimate the fearful extent of the deficiency under which you labour; to resist the delusive whispering of peace, when there is no peace; and to understand, that the wrath of God abideth on every child of nature, however rich he may be in the virtues and accomplishments of nature.

But again. This view of the distinction between the two sets of virtues, will serve to explain how it is, that, in the act of turning unto God, the one class of them appears to gather more copiously, and more conspicuously, upon the front of a renewed character, than the other class; how it is, that the former wear a more unequivocal aspect of religiousness than the latter; how it is, that an air

of gravity, and decency, and seriousness, looks to be more in alliance with sanctity, than the air either of open integrity, or of smiling benevolence; how it is, that the most ostensible change in the habit of a converted profligate, is that change in virtue of which he withdraws himself from the companions of his licentiousness; and that to renounce the dissipations of his former life, stands far more frequently, or, at least, far more visibly, associated with the act of putting on Christianity, than to renounce the dishonesties of his former life It is true, that, by the law of the gospel, he is laid as strictly under the authority of the commandment to live righteously, as of the commandment to live soberly. But there is a compound character in those virtues which are merely social; and the presence of the one ingredient serves to throw into the shade, or to disguise altogether, the presence of the other ingredient. There is a greater number of irreligious men, who are at the same time just in their dealings, than there is of irreligious men, who are at the same time pure and temperate in their habits; and therefore it is, that justice, even the most scrupulous, is not so specifical, and, of course, not so satisfying a mark of religion, as is a sobriety that is rigid and unviolable. And all this helps to explain how it is, that when a man comes under the power of religion, to abandon the levities of his past conduct is an event which stands far more noticeably out upon him, at this stage of his history, than to abandon the iniquities of his past conduct; that the most characteristic transformation which takes place at such a time, is a trans-

formation from thoughtlessness, and from licentious gaiety, and from the festive indulgencies of those with whom he wont to run to all those excesses of riot, of which the Apostle says, that they which do these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God: for even then, and in the very midst of all his impiety, he may have been kind-hearted, and there might be no room upon his person for a visible transformation from inhumanity of character; even then, he may have been honourable, and there might be as little room for a visible transformation from fraudulency of character.

Thirdly. Nothing is more obvious than the antipathy that is felt by a certain class of religionists against the preaching of good works; and the antipathy is assuredly well and warrantably grounded, when it is such a preaching as goes to reduce the importance, or to infringe upon the simplicity, of the great doctrine of justification by faith. But along with this, may there not be remarked the toleration with which they will listen to a discourse upon one set of good works, and the evident coldness and dislike with which they listen to a discourse on another set of them; how a pointed remonstrance against sabbath breaking sounds in their ears, as if more in character from the pulpit, than a pointed remonstrance against the commission of theft, or the speaking of evil; how an eulogium on the observance of family worship feels, in their taste, to be more impregnated with the spirit of sacredness, than an eulogium on the virtues of the shop, or of the market-place, and that, while the one is approven of as having

about it the solemn and the suitable characteristics of godliness, the other is stigmatized as a piece of barren, heartless, heathenish, and philosophic morality? Now, this antipathy to the preaching of the latter species of good works has something peculiar in it. It is not enough to say, that it arises from a sensitive alarm about the stability of the doctrine of justification; for let it be observed, that this doctrine stands opposed to the merit not of one particular class of performances, but to the merit of all performances whatsoever. It is just as unscriptural a detraction from the great truth of salvation by faith, to rest our acceptance with God on the duties of prayer, or of rigid sabbath keeping, or of strict and untainted sobriety, as to rest it on the punctual fulfilment of all our bargains, and on the extent of our manifold liberalities. It is not, then, a mere zeal about the great article of justification which lies at the bottom of that peculiar aversion that is felt towards a sermon on some social or humane accomplishment; and that is not felt towards a sermon on sober-mindedness, or a sermon on the observation of the sacrament, or a sermon on any of those performances which bear a more direct and exclusive reference to God. We shall find the explanation of this phenomenon, which often presents itself in the religious world, in that distinction of which we have just required that it should be kept in steady hold, and followed into its various applications. The aversion in question is often, in fact, a well-founded aversion, to a topic, which, though religious in the matter of it, may, from the way in which it is proposed,

be altogether secular in the principle of it. It is resistance to what is deemed, and justly deemed, an act of usurpation on the part of certain virtues, which, when unanimated by a sentiment of godliness, are entitled to no place whatever in the ministrations of the gospel of Christ. It proceeds from a most enlightened fear, lest that should be held to make up the whole of religion, which is in fact utterly devoid of the spirit of religion; and from a true and tender apprehension, lest, on the possession of certain accomplishments, which secure a fleeting credit throughout the little hour of this world's history, deluded man should look forward to his eternity with hope, and upward to his God with complacency—while he carries not on his forehead one vestige of the character of heaven, one lineament of the aspect of godliness.

And lastly. The first class of virtues bear the character of religiousness more *strongly*, just because they bear that character more *singly*. The people who are without, might, no doubt, see in every real Christian the virtues of the second class also; but these virtues do not belong to them peculiarly and exclusively. For though it be true, that every religious man must be honest, the converse does not follow, that every honest man must be religious. And it is because the social accomplishments do not form the specific, that neither do they form the most prominent and distinguishing marks of Christianity. They may also be recognised as features in the character of men, who utterly repudiate the whole style and doctrine of the New Testament; and hence a very

prevalent impression in society, that the faith of the gospel does not bear so powerfully and so directly on the relative virtues of human conduct. A few instances of hypocrisy amongst the more serious professors of our faith, serve to rivet the impression, and to give it perpetuity in the world. One single example, indeed, of sanctimonious duplicity, will suffice, in the judgment of many, to cover the whole of vital and orthodox Christianity with disgrace. The report of it will be borne in triumph amongst the companies of the irreligious. The man who pays no homage to sabbaths or to sacraments, will be contrasted in the open, liberal, and manly style, of all his transactions, with the low cunning of this drivelling methodistical pretender; and the loud laugh of a multitude of scorners, will give a force and a swell to this public outcry against the whole character of the sainthood.

Now, this delusion on the part of the unbelieving world is very natural, and ought not to excite our astonishment. We are not surprised, from the reasons already adverted to, that the truth, and the justice, and the humanity, and the moral loveliness, which do in fact belong to every new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord, should miss their observation; or, at least, fail to be recognised among the other more obvious characteristics into which believers have been translated by the faith of the gospel. But, on this very subject, there is a tendency to delusion on the part of the disciples of the faith. They need to be reminded of the solemn and indispensable religiousness of the

second class of virtues. They need to be told, that though these virtues do possess the one ingredient of being approved by men, and may, on this single account, be found to reside in the characters of those who live without God—yet, that they also possess the other ingredient of being acceptable unto God; and, on this latter account, should be made the subjects of their most strenuous cultivation. They must not lose sight of the one ingredient in the other; or stigmatize, as so many fruitless and insignificant moralities, those virtues which enter as component parts into the service of Christ; so that he who in these things serveth Christ, is both acceptable to God, and approved by men. They must not expend all their warmth on the high and peculiar doctrines of the New Testament, while they offer a cold and reluctant admission to the practical duties of the New Testament. The Apostle has bound the one to the other by a tie of immediate connexion. Wherefore, lie not one to another, as ye have put off the old man and his deeds, and put on the new man, which is formed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. Here the very obvious and popular accomplishment of truth is grafted on the very peculiar doctrine of regeneration: and we altogether mistake the kind of transforming influence which the faith of the gospel brings along with it, if we think that uprightness of character does not emerge at the same time with godliness of character; or that the virtues of society do not form upon the believer into as rich and varied an assemblage, as do the

virtues of the sanctuary, or that, while he puts on those graces which are singly acceptable to God, he falls behind in any of those graces which are both acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Let, therefore, every pretender to Christianity vindicate this assertion by his own personal history in the world. Let him not lay his godliness aside, when he is done with the morning devotion of his family; but carry it abroad with him, and make it his companion and his guide through the whole business of the day; always bearing in his heart the sentiment, that thou God seest me; and remembering, that there is not one hour that can flow, or one occasion that can cast up, where His law is not present with some imperious exaction or other. It is false, that the principle of Christian sanctification possesses no influence over the familiarities of civil and ordinary life. It is altogether false, that godliness is a virtue of such a lofty and monastic order, as to hold its dominion only over the solemnities of worship, or over the solitudes of prayer and spiritual contemplation. If it be substantially a grace within us at all, it will give a direction and a colour to the whole of our path in society. There is not one conceivable transaction, amongst all the manifold varieties of human employment, which it is not fitted to animate by its spirit. There is nothing that meets us too homely, to be beyond the reach of obtaining, from its influence, the stamp of something celestial. It offers to take the whole man under its ascendancy, and to subordinate all his movements: nor does it hold the place which rightfully belongs to it, till it

be vested with a presiding authority over the entire system of human affairs. And therefore it is, that the preacher is not bringing down Christianity—he is only sending it abroad over the field of its legitimate operation, when he goes with it to your counting-houses, and there rebukes every selfish inclination that would carry you ever so little within the limits of fraudulency; when he enters into your chambers of agency, and there detects the character of falsehood, which lurks under all the plausibility of your multiplied and excessive charges; when he repairs to the crowded market-place, and pronounces of every bargain, over which truth, in all the strictness of quakerism, has not presided, that it is tainted with moral evil; when he looks into your shops, and, in listening to the contest of argument between him who magnifies his article, and him who pretends to undervalue it, he calls it the contest of avarice, broken loose from the restraints of integrity. He is not, by all this, vulgarizing religion, or giving it the hue and the character of earthliness. He is only asserting the might and the universality of its sole pre-eminence over man. And therefore it is, that if possible to solemnize his hearers to the practice of simplicity and godly sincerity in their dealings, he would try to make the odiousness of sin stand visibly out on every shade and modification of dishonesty; and to assure them, that if there be a place in our world, where the subtle evasion, and the dexterous imposition, and the sly but gainful concealment, and the report which misleads an inquirer, and the gloss which tempts the unwary purchaser—are not only

currently practised in the walks of merchandise, but, when not carried forward to the glare and the literality of falsehood, are beheld with general connivance; if there be a place where the sense of morality has thus fallen, and all the nicer delicacies of conscience are overborne in the keen and ambitious rivalry of men hastening to be rich, and wholly given over to the idolatrous service of the God of this world—then that is the place, the smoke of whose iniquity rises before Him who sitteth on the throne, in a tide of deepest and most revolting abomination.

And here we have to complain of the public injustice that is done to Christianity, when one of its ostentatious professors has acted the hypocrite, and stands in disgraceful exposure before the eyes of the world. We advert to the readiness with which this is turned into a matter of general impeachment, against every appearance of seriousness; and how loud the exclamation is against the religion of all who signalize themselves; and that, if the aspect of godliness be so very decided as to become an aspect of peculiarity, then is this peculiarity converted into a ground of distrust and suspicion against the bearer of it. Now, it so happens, that, in the midst of this world lying in wickedness, a man, to be a Christian at all, must signalize himself. Neither is he in a way of salvation, unless he be one of a very peculiar people; nor would we precipitately consign him to discredit, even though the peculiarity be so very glaring as to provoke the charge of methodism. But, instead of making one man's hypocrisy act as

a drawback upon the reputation of a thousand, we submit, if it would not be a fairer and more philosophical procedure, just to betake one's-self to the method of induction—to make a walking survey over the town, and record an inventory of all the men in it who are so very far gone as to have the voice of psalms in their family; or as to attend the meetings of fellowship for prayer; or as scrupulously to abstain from all that is questionable in the amusements of the world; or as, by any other marked and visible symptom whatever, to stand out to general observation as the members of a saintly and separated society. We know, that even of such there are a few, who, if Paul were alive, would move him to weep for the reproach they bring upon His master. But we also know, that the blind and impetuous world exaggerates the few into the many; inverts the process of atonement altogether, by laying the sins of one man upon the multitude; looks at their general aspect of sanctity, and is so engrossed with this single expression of character, as to be insensible to the noble uprightness, and the tender humanity, with which this sanctity is associated. And therefore it is, that we offer the assertion, and challenge all to its most thorough and searching investigation, that the Christianity of these people, which many think does nothing but cant, and profess, and run after ordinances, has augmented their honesties and their liberalities, and that, tenfold beyond the average character of society; that these are the men we oftenest meet with in the mansions of poverty—and who look with the most wakeful eye

over all the sufferings and necessities of our species —and who open their hand most widely in behalf of the imploring and the friendless—and to whom, in spite of all their mockery, the men of the world are sure, in the negotiations of business, to award the readiest confidence—and who sustain the most splendid part in all those great movements of philanthropy which bear on the general interests of mankind—and who, with their eye full upon eternity, scatter the most abundant blessings over the fleeting pilgrimage of time—and who, while they hold their conversation in heaven, do most enrich the earth we tread upon, with all those virtues which secure enjoyment to families, and uphold the order and prosperity of the commonwealth.

DISCOURSE III.

THE POWER OF SELFISHNESS IN PROMOTING THE HONESTIES OF MERCANTILE INTERCOURSE.

"And if you do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same."—LUKE vi. 33.

IT is to be remarked of many of those duties, the performance of which confers the least distinction upon an individual, that they are at the same time the very duties, the violation of which would confer upon him the largest measure of obloquy and disgrace. Truth and justice do not serve to elevate a man so highly above the average morality of his species, as would generosity, or ardent friendship, or devoted and disinterested patriotism. The former are greatly more common than the latter; and, on that account, the presence of them is not so calculated to signalize the individual to whom they belong. But that is one account, also, why the absence of them would make him a more monstrous exception to the general run of character in society. And, accordingly, while it is true, that there are more men of integrity in the world, than there are men of very wide and liberal beneficence—it is also true, that one act of falsehood, or one act of dishonesty, would stamp a far more burning infamy on the name of a transgressor, than any defect in

those more heroic charities, and extraordinary virtues, of which humanity is capable.

So it is far more disgraceful not to be just to another, than not to be kind to him; and, at the same time, an act of kindness may be held in higher positive estimation than an act of justice. The one is my right—nor is there any call for the homage of a particular testimony when it is rendered. The other is additional to my right—the offering of a spontaneous good will, which I had no title to exact; and which, therefore, when rendered to me, excites in my bosom the cordiality of a warmer acknowledgment. And yet, our Saviour, who knew what was in man, saw, that much of the apparent kindness of nature, was resolvible into the real selfishness of nature; that much of the good done unto others, was done in the hope that these others would do something again. And, we believe, it would be found by an able analyst of the human character, that this was the secret but substantial principle of many of the civilities and hospitalities of ordinary intercourse—that if there were no expectation either of a return in kind, or of a return in gratitude, or of a return in popularity, many of the sweetening and cementing virtues of a neighbourhood would be practically done away—all serving to prove, that a multitude of virtues, which, in effect, promoted the comfort and the interest of others, were tainted in principle by a latent regard to one's own interest; and that thus being the fellowship of those who did good, either as a return for the good done unto them, or who did good in hope of such a return, it might be,

in fact, what our Saviour characterizes it in the text—the fellowship of sinners.

But if to do that which is unjust, is still more disgraceful than not to do that which is kind, it would prove all the more strikingly how deeply sin had tainted the moral constitution of our species—could it be shown, that the great practical restraint on the prevalence of this more disgraceful thing in society, is the tie of that common selfishness which actuates and characterizes all its members. It were a curious but important question, were it capable of being resolved—if men did not feel it their interest to be honest, how much of the actual doings of honesty would still be kept up in the world? It is our own opinion of the nature of man, that it has its honourable feelings, and its instinctive principles of rectitude, and its constitutional love of truth and of integrity; and that, on the basis of these, a certain portion of uprightness would remain amongst us, without the aid of any prudence, or any calculation whatever. All this we have fully conceded; and have already attempted to demonstrate, that, in spite of it, the character of man is thoroughly pervaded by the very essence of sinfulness; because, with all the native virtues which adorn it, there adheres to it that foulest of all spiritual deformities—unconcern about God, and even antipathy to God. It has been argued against the orthodox doctrine of the universality of human corruption, that even without the sphere of the operation of the gospel, there do occur so many engaging specimens of worth and benevolence in society. The reply is, that this may be no deduc-

tion from the doctrine whatever, but be even an aggravation of it—should the very men who exemplify so much of what is amiable, carry in their hearts an indifference to the will of that Being who thus hath formed, and thus hath embellished them. But it would be a heavy deduction indeed, not from the doctrine, but from its hostile and imposing argument, could it be shown, that the vast majority of all equitable dealing amongst men, is performed, not on the principle of honour at all, but on the principle of selfishness—that this is the soil upon which the honesty of the world mainly flourishes, and is sustained; that, were the connexion dissolved between justice to others and our own particular advantage, this would go very far to banish the observation of justice from the earth; that, generally speaking, men are honest, not because they are lovers of God, and not even because they are lovers of virtue, but because they are lovers of their own-selves—insomuch, that if it were possible to disjoin the good of self altogether from the habit of doing what was fair, as well as from the habit of doing what was kind to the people around us, this would not merely isolate the children of men from each other, in respect of the obligations of beneficence, but it would arm them into an undisguised hostility against each other, in respect of their rights. The mere disinterested principle would set up a feeble barrier, indeed, against a desolating tide of selfishness, now set loose from the consideration of its own advantage. The genuine depravity of the human heart would burst forth and show itself in its true characters; and the world in which we live be

transformed into a scene of unblushing fraud, of open and lawless depredation.

And, perhaps, after all, the best way of arriving practically at the solution of this question would be, not by a formal induction of particular cases, but by committing the matter to the gross and general experience of those who are most conversant in the affairs of business. There is a sort of undefinable impression that all have upon this subject, on the justness of which, however, we are disposed to lay a very considerable stress—an impression gathered out of the mass of the recollections of a whole life—an impression founded on what we may have observed in the history of our own doings—a kind of tact that we have acquired as the fruit of our repeated intercourse with men, and of the manifold transactions that we have had with them, and of the number of times in which we have been personally implicated with the play of human passions, and human interests. It is our own conviction, that a well exercised merchant could cast a more intelligent glance at this question, than a well exercised metaphysician; and therefore do we submit its decision to those of them who have hazarded most largely, and most frequently, on the faith of agents, and customers, and distant correspondents. We know the fact of a very secure and well warranted confidence in the honesty of others, being widely prevalent amongst men; and that, were it not for this, all the interchanges of trade would be suspended; and that confidence is the very soul and life of commercial activity; and it is delightful to think, how thus a man can

suffer all the wealth which belongs to him to depart from under his eye, and to traverse the mightiest oceans and continents of our world, and to pass into the custody of men whom he never saw. And it is a sublime homage, one should think, to the honourable and high-minded principles of our nature, that, under their guardianship, the adverse hemispheres of the globe should be bound together in safe and profitable merchandise; and that thus one should sleep with a bosom undisturbed by jealousy, in Britain, who has all, and more than all his property treasured in the warehouses of India —and that, just because there he knows there is vigilance to defend it, and activity to dispose of it, and truth to account for it, and all those trusty virtues which ennoble the character of man to shield it from injury, and send it back again in an increasing tide of opulence to his door.

There is no question, then, as to the fact of a very extended practical honesty, between man and man, in their intercourse with each other. The only question is, as to the reason of the fact. Why is it, that he whom we have trusted acquits himself of his trust with such correctness and fidelity? Whether is his mind, in so doing, most set upon our interest or upon his own? Whether is it because he seeks our advantage in it, or because he finds in it his own advantage? Tell us to which of the two concerns he is most tremblingly alive—to our property, or to his own character? and whether, upon the last of these feelings, he may not be more forcibly impelled to equitable dealing than upon the first of them? We well

know, that there is room enough in his bosom for both; but to determine how powerfully selfishness is blended with the punctualities and the integrities of business, let us ask those who can speak most soundly and experimentally on the subject, what would be the result, if the element of selfishness were so detached from the operations of trade, that there was no such thing as a man suffering in his prosperity, because he suffered in his good name; that there was no such thing as a desertion of custom and employment coming upon the back of a blasted credit, and a tainted reputation; in a word, if the only security we had of man was his principles, and that his interest flourished and augmented just as surely without his principles as with them? Tell us, if the hold we have of a man's own personal advantage were thus broken down, in how far the virtues of the mercantile world would survive it? Would not the world of trade sustain as violent a derangement on this mighty hold being cut asunder, as the world of nature would on the suspending of the law of gravitation? Would not the whole system, in fact, fall to pieces, and be dissolved? Would not men, when thus released from the magical chain of their own interest, which bound them together into a fair and seeming compact of principle, like dogs of rapine, let loose upon their prey, overleap the barrier which formerly restrained them? Does not this prove, that selfishness, after all, is the grand principle on which the brotherhood of the human race is made to hang together; and that he who can make the wrath of man to praise him, has also upon

the selfishness of man, caused a most beauteous order of wide and useful intercourse to be suspended?

But let us here stop to observe, that, while there is much in this contemplation to magnify the wisdom of the Supreme Contriver, there is also much in it to humble man, and to convict him of the deceitfulness of that moral complacency with which he looks to his own character, and his own attainments. There is much in it to demonstrate, that his righteousness are as filthy rags; and that the idolatry of self, however hidden in its operation, may be detected in almost every one of them. God may combine the separate interests of every individual of the human race, and the strenuous prosecution of these interests by each of them, into an harmonious system of operation, for the good of one great and extended family. But if, on estimating the character of each individual member of that family, we shall find, that the mainspring of his actions is the urgency of a selfish inclination; and that to this his very virtues are subordinate; and that even the honesties which mark his conduct are chiefly, though perhaps insensibly, due to the selfishness which actuates and occupies his whole heart;—then, let the semblance be what it may, still the reality of the case accords with the most mortifying representations of the New Testament. The moralities of nature are but the moralities of a day, and will cease to be applauded when this world, the only theatre of their applause, is burnt up. They are but the blossoms of that rank efflorescence which is nourished on the soil of human corruption, and can

never bring forth fruit unto immortality. The discerner of all secrets sees that they emanate from a principle which is at utter war with the charity that prepares for the enjoyments, and that glows in the bosoms of the celestial; and, therefore, though highly esteemed among men, they may be in his sight an abomination.

Let us, if possible, make this still clearer to the apprehension, by descending more minutely into particulars. There is not one member of the great mercantile family, with whom there does not obtain a reciprocal interest between himself and all those who compose the circle of his various correspondents. He does them good; but his eye is all the while open to the expectation of their doing him something again. They minister to him all the profits of his employment; but not unless he minister to them of his service, and attention, and fidelity. Insomuch, that if his credit abandon him, his prosperity will also abandon him. If he forfeit the confidence of others, he will also forfeit their custom along with it. So that, in perfect consistency with interest being the reigning idol of his soul, he may still be, in every way, as sensitive of encroachment upon his reputation, as he would be of encroachment upon his property; and be as vigilant, to the full, in guarding his name against the breath of calumny, or suspicion, as in guarding his estate against the inroads of a depredator. Now, this tie of reciprocity, which binds him into fellowship and good faith with society at large, will sometimes, in the mere course of business, and its unlooked-for fluctu

ations, draw one or two individuals into a still more special intimacy with himself. There may be a lucrative partnership, in which it is the pressing necessity of each individual, that all of them, for a time at least, stick closely and steadily together. Or there may be a thriving interchange of commodities struck out, where it is the mutual interest of all who are concerned, that each take his assigned part and adhere to it Or there may be a promising arrangement devised, which it needs concert and understanding to effectuate; and, for which purpose, several may enter into a skilful and well ordered combination. We are neither saying that this is very general in the mercantile world, or that it is in the slightest degree unfair. But all must be sensible, that, amid the reelings and movements of the great trading society, the phenomenon sometimes offers itself of a groupe of individuals who have entered into some compact of mutual accommodation, and who, therefore, look as if they were isolated from the rest by the bond of some more strict and separate alliance. All we aim at, is to gather illustration to our principle, out of the way in which the members of this associated cluster conduct themselves to each other; how such a cordiality may pass between them, as, one could suppose, to be the cordiality of genuine friendship; how such an intercourse might be maintained among their families, as might look like the intercourse of unmingled affection; how such an exuberance of mutual hospitality might be poured forth, as to recall those poetic days when avarice was unknown, and men lived

in harmony together on the fruits of one common inheritance; and how nobly disdainful each member of the combination appeared to be of such little savings, as could be easily surrendered to the general good and adjustment of the whole concern. And all this, it will be observed, so long as the concern prospered, and it was for the interest of each to abide by it; and the respective accounts current gladdened the heart of every individual, by the exhibition of an abundant share of the common benefit to himself. But then, every such system of operations comes to an end. And what we ask is, if it be at all an unlikely evolution of our nature, that the selfishness which lay in wrapt concealment, during the progress of these transactions, should now come forward and put out to view its cloven foot, when they draw to their termination? And as the tie of reciprocity gets looser, is it not a very possible thing, that the murmurs of something like unfair or unhandsome conduct should get louder? And that a fellowship, hitherto carried forward in smiles, should break up in reproaches? And that the whole character of this fellowship should show itself more unequivocally as it comes nearer to its close? And that some of its members, as they are becoming disengaged from the bond of mutual interest, should also become disengaged from the bond of those mutual delicacies and proprieties, and even honesties, which had heretofore marked the whole of their intercourse?—Insomuch, that a matter in which all the parties looked so fair, and magnanimous, and liberal, might at length degenerate

into a contest of keen appropriation, a scramble of downright and undisguised selfishness?

But though this may happen sometimes, we are far from saying that it will happen generally. It could not, in fact, without such an exposure of character, as might not merely bring a man down in the estimation of those from whom he is now withdrawing himself, but also in the estimation of that general public with whom he is still linked; and on whose opinion of him there still rests the dependence of a strong personal interest. To estimate precisely the whole influence of this consideration, or the degree in which honesty of character is resolvible into selfishness of character, it would be necessary to suppose, that the tie of reciprocity was dissolved, not merely between the individual and those with whom he had been more particularly and more intimately associated—but that the tie of reciprocity was dissolved between the individual and the whole of his former acquaintanceship in business. Now, the situation which comes nearest to this, is that of a man on the eve of bankruptcy, and with no sure hope of so retrieving his circumstances as again to emerge into credit, and be restored to some employment of gain or of confidence. If he have either honourable or religious feelings, then character, as connected with principle, may still, in his eyes, be something; but character, as connected with prudence, or the calculations of interest, may now be nothing. In the dark hour of the desperation of his soul, he may feel, in fact, that he has nothing to lose: and let us now see how he will conduct himself, when thus released

from that check of reputation which formerly held him. In these circumstances, if you have ever seen the man abandon himself to utter regardlessness of all the honesties which at one time adorned him; and doing such disgraceful things as he would have spurned at the very suggestion of, in the days of his prosperity; and, forgetful of his former name, practising all possible shifts of duplicity to prolong the credit of a tottering establishment; and to keep himself afloat for a few months of torture and restlessness, weaving such a web of entanglement around his many friends and companions, as shall most surely implicate some of them in his fall; and, as the crisis approaches, plying his petty wiles how to survive the coming ruin, and to gather up of its fragments to his family. O! how much is there here to deplore; and who can be so ungenerous as to stalk in unrelenting triumph over the helplessness of so sad an overthrow! But if ever such an exhibition meet your eye, while we ask you not to withhold your pity from the unfortunate, we ask you also to read in it a lesson of worthless and sunken humanity; how even its very virtues are tinctured with corruption; and that the honour, and the truth, and the equity, with which man proudly thinks his nature to be embellished, are often reared on the basis of selfishness, and lie prostrate in the dust when that basis is cut away.

But other instances may be quoted, which go still more satisfactorily to prove the very extended influence of selfishness on the moral judgments of our species; and how readily the estimate, which

a man forms on the question of right and wrong, accommodates itself to his own interest. There is a strong general reciprocity of advantage between the government of a country and all its inhabitants. The one party, in this relation, renders a revenue for the expenses of the state. The other party renders back again protection from injustice and violence. Were the means furnished by the former withheld, the benefit conferred by the latter would cease to be administered. So that, with the government, and the public at large, nothing can be more strict, and more indispensable, than the tie of reciprocity that is between them. But this is not felt, and therefore not acted upon, by the separate individuals who compose that public. The reciprocity does not come home with a sufficiently pointed and personal application to each of them. Every man may calculate, that though he, on the strength of some dexterous evasions, were to keep back of the tribute that is due by him, the mischief that would recoil upon himself is divided with the rest of his countrymen; and the portion of it which comes to his door would be so very small, as to be altogether insensible. To all feeling he will just be as effectually sheltered, by the power and the justice of his country, whether he pay his taxes in full, or, under the guise of some skilful concealment, pay them but partially; and, therefore, to every practical effect, the tie of reciprocity, between him and his sovereign, is in a great measure dissolved. Now, what is the actual adjustment of the moral sense, and moral conduct, of the population, to

this state of matters? It is quite palpable. Subterfuges which, in private business, would be held to be disgraceful, are not held to be so disgraceful in this department of a man's personal transactions. The cry of indignation, which would be lifted up against the falsehood or dishonesty of a man's dealings in his own neighbourhood, is mitigated or unheard, though, in his dealings with the state, there should be the very same relaxation of principle. On this subject, there is a connivance of popular feeling, which, if extended to the whole of human traffic, would banish all its securities from the world—giving reason to believe, that much of the good done among men, is done on the expectation of a good that will be rendered back again; and that many of the virtues, by which the fellowship of human beings is regulated and sustained, still leave the imputation unredeemed, of its being a fellowship of sinners; and that both the practice of morality, and the demand for it, are measured by the operation of a self-love, which, so far from signalizing any man, or preparing him for eternity, he holds in common with the fiercest and most degenerate of his species; and that, apart from the consideration of his own interest, simplicity and godly sincerity are, to a great degree, unknown; insomuch, that though God has interposed with a law, of giving unto all their dues, and tribute to whom tribute is due, we may venture an affirmation of the vast majority of this tribute, that it is rendered for wrath's sake, and not for conscience' sake. Of so little effect is unsupported and solitary conscience to stem the tide of selfishness.

And it is chiefly when honesty and truth go overbearingly along with this tide, that the voice of man is lifted up to acknowledge them, and his heart becomes feelingly alive to a sense of their obligations.

And let us here just ask, in what relation of criminality does he who uses a contraband article stand to him who deals in it? In precisely the same relation that a receiver of stolen goods stands to a thief or a depredator. There may be some who revolt at the idea of being so classified. But, if the habit we have just denounced can be fastened on men of rank and seemly reputation, let us just humble ourselves into the admission of how little the righteous practice of the world has the foundation of righteous principle to sustain it; how feeble are the securities of rectitude, had it nothing to uphold it but its own native charms, and native obligations; how society is held together, only because the grace of God can turn to account the worthless propensities of the individuals who compose it; and how, if the virtues of fidelity, and truth, and justice, had not the prop of selfishness to rest upon, they would, with the exception of a few scattered remnants, take their departure from the world, and leave it a prey to the anarchy of human passions—to the wild misrule of all those depravities which agitate and deform our ruined nature.

The very same exhibition of our nature may be witnessed in almost every parish of our sister kingdom, where the people render a revenue to the minister of religion, and the minister renders

back again a return, it is true—but not such a return, as, in the estimation of gross and ordinary selfishness, is at all deemed an equivalent for the sacrifice which has been made. In this instance, too, that law of reciprocity which reigns throughout the common transactions of merchandise, is altogether suspended; and the consequence is, that the law of right is trampled into ashes. A tide of public odium runs against the men who are outraged of their property, and a smile of general connivance rewards the successful dexterity of the men who invade it. That portion of the annual produce of our soil, which, on a foundation of legitimacy as firm as the property of the soil itself, is allotted to a set of national functionaries—and which, but for them, would all have gone, in the shape of increased revenue, to the indolent proprietor, is altogether thrown loose from the guardianship of that great principle of reciprocity, on which we strongly suspect that the honesties of this world are mainly supported. The national clergy of England may be considered as standing out of the pale of this guardianship; and the consequence is, that what is most rightfully and most sacredly theirs, is abandoned to the gambol of many thousand depredators; and, in addition to a load of most unmerited obloquy, have they had to sustain all the heartburnings of known and felt injustice; and that intercourse between the teachers and the taught, which ought surely to be an intercourse of peace, and friendship, and righteousness, is turned into a contest between the natural avarice of the one party, and the natural

resentments of the other. It is not that we wish our sister church were swept away, for we honestly think, that the overthrow of that establishment would be a severe blow to the Christianity of our land. It is not that we envy that great hierarchy the splendour of her endowments—for better a dinner of herbs, when surrounded by the love of parishioners, than a preferment of stalled dignity, and strife therewith. It is not either that we look upon her ministers as having at all disgraced themselves by their rapacity; for look to the amount of the encroachments that are made upon them, and we shall see that they have carried their privileges with the most exemplary forbearance and moderation. But, from these very encroachments do we infer how lawless a human being will become, when emancipated from the bond of his own interest; how much such a state of things must multiply the temptations to injustice over the face of the country; and how desirable, therefore, that it were put an end to—not by the abolition of that venerable church, but by a fair and liberal commutation of the revenues which support her—not by bringing any blight on the property of her ecclesiastics, but by the removal of a most devouring blight from the worth of her population—that every provocative to injustice may be done away, and the frailty of human principle be no longer left to such a ruinous and such a withering exposure.

This instance we would not have mentioned, but for the sake of adding another experimental proof to the lesson of our text; and we now

hasten onward to the lesson itself, with a few of its applications.

We trust you are convinced, from what has been said, that much of the actual honesty of the world is due to the selfishness of the world. And then you will surely admit, that, in as far as this is the actuating principle, honesty descends from its place as a rewardable, or even as an amiable virtue, and sinks down into the character of a mere prudential virtue—which, so far from conferring any moral exaltation on him by whom it is exemplified, emanates out of a propensity that seems inseparable from the constitution of every sentient being—and by which man is, in one point, assimilated either to the most worthless of his own species, or to those inferior animals among whom worth is unattainable.

And let it not deafen the humbling impression of this argument, that you are not distinctly conscious of the operation of selfishness, as presiding at every step over the honesty of your daily and familiar transactions; and that the only inward checks against injustice, of which you are sensible, are the aversion of a generous indignancy towards it, and the positive discomfort you would incur by the reproaches of your own conscience. Selfishness, in fact, may have originated and alimented the whole of this virtue that belongs to you, and yet the mind incur the same discomfort by the violation of it, that it would do by the violation of any other of its established habits. And as to the generous indignancy of your feelings against all that is fraudulently and disgracefully wrong, let us

never forget, that this may be the nurtured fruit of that common selfishness which links human beings with each other into a relationship of mutual dependance. This may be seen, in all its perfection, among the leagued and sworn banditti of the highway; who, while execrated by society at large for the compact of iniquity into which they have entered, can maintain the most heroic fidelity to the virtues of their own brotherhood; and be, in every way, as lofty and as chivalrous with their points of honour, as we are with ours; and elevate as indignant a voice against the worthlessness of him who could betray the secret of their association, or break up any of the securities by which it was held together. And, in like manner, may we be the members of a wider combination, yet brought together by the tie of reciprocal interest; and all the virtues essential to the existence, or to the good of such a combination, may come to be idolized amongst us; and the breath of human applause may fan them into a lustre of splendid estimation; and yet the good man of society on earth be, in common with all his fellows, an utter outcast from the society of heaven—with his heart altogether bereft of that allegiance to God which forms the reigning principle of his unfallen creation—and in a state of entire destitution either as to that love of the Supreme Being, or as to that disinterested love of those around us, which form the graces and the virtues of eternity.

We have not affirmed that there is no such thing as a native and disinterested principle of honour among men. But we have affirmed, on a former

occasion, that a sense of honour may be in the heart, and the sense of God be utterly away from it. And we affirm now, that much of the honest practice of the world is not due to honesty of principle at all, but takes its origin from a baser ingredient of our constitution altogether. How wide is the operation of selfishness on the one hand, and how limited is the operation of abstract principle on the other, it were difficult to determine; and such a labyrinth to man is his own heart, that he may be utterly unable, from his own consciousness, to answer this question. But amid all the difficulties of such an analysis to himself, we ask him to think of another who is unseen by us, but who is represented to us as seeing all things. We know not in what characters this heavenly witness can be more impressively set forth, than as pondering the heart, as weighing the secrets of the heart, as fastening an attentive and a judging eye on all the movements of it, as treasuring up the whole of man's outward and inward history in a book of remembrance; and as keeping it in reserve for that day when, it is said, that the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and God shall bring out every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Your consciousness may not distinctly inform you, in how far the integrity of your habits is due to the latent operation of selfishness, or to the more direct and obvious operation of honour. But your consciousness may, perhaps, inform you, distinctly enough, how little a share the will of God has in the way of influence on any of your doings. Your own

sense and memory of what passes within you may charge you with the truth of this monstrous indictment—that you live without God in the world; that however you may be signalized among your fellows, by that worth of character which is held in highest value and demand amongst the individuals of a mercantile society, it is at least without the influence of a godly principle that you have reached the maturity of an established reputation; that either the proud emotions of rectitude which glow within your bosom are totally untinctured by a feeling of homage to the Deity—or that, without any such emotions, Self is the divinity you have all along worshipped, and your very virtues are so many offerings of reverence at her shrine. If such be, in fact, the nakedness of your spiritual condition, is it not high time, we ask, that you awaken out of this delusion, and shake the lying spirit of deep and heavy slumber away from you? Is it not high time, when eternity is so fast coming on, that you examine your accounts with God, and seek for a settlement with that Being who will so soon meet your disembodied spirits with the question of—what have you done unto me? And if all the virtues which adorn you are but the subserviences of time, and of its accommodations—if either done altogether unto yourselves, or done without the recognition of God on the spontaneous instigation of your own feelings—is it not high time that you lean no longer to the securities on which you have rested, and that you seek for acceptance with your Maker on a more firm and unalterable foundation?

This, then, is the terminating object of all the experience that we have tried to set before you. We want it to be a schoolmaster to bring you unto Christ. We want you to open your eyes to the accordancy which obtains between the theology of the New Testament, and the actual state and history of man. Above all, we want you to turn your eyes inwardly upon yourselves, and there to behold a character without one trace or lineament of godliness—there to behold a heart, set upon totally other things than those which constitute the portion and the reward of eternity—there to behold every principle of action resolvible into the idolatry of self, or, at least, into something independant of the authority of God—there to behold how worthless in their substance are those virtues which look so imposing in their semblance and their display, and draw around them here a popularity and an applause which will all be dissipated into nothing, when hereafter they are brought up for examination to the judgment-seat. We want you, when the revelation of the gospel charges you with the totality and magnitude of your corruption, that you acquiesce in that charge; and that you may perceive the trueness of it, under the disguise of all those hollow and unsubstantial accomplishments with which nature may deck her own fallen and degenerate children. It is easy to be amused, and interested, and intellectually regaled, by an analysis of the human character, and a survey of human society. But it is not so easy to reach the individual conscience with the lesson—we are undone. It is not so easy to strike the alarm into

your hearts of the present guilt, and the future damnation. It is not so easy to send the pointed arrow of conviction into your bosoms, where it may keep by you, and pursue you like an arrow sticking fast; or so to humble you into the conclusion, that, in the sight of God, you are an accursed thing, as that you may seek unto him who became a curse for you, and as that the preaching of His cross might cease to be foolishness.

Be assured, then, if you keep by the ground of being justified by your present works, you will perish; and though we may not have succeeded in convincing you of their worthlessness, be assured, that a day is coming, when such a flaw of deceitfulness, in the principle of them all, shall be laid open, as will demonstrate the equity of your entire and everlasting condemnation. To avert the fearfulness of that day is the message of the great atonement sounded in your ears; and the blood of Christ, cleansing from all sin, is offered to your acceptance; and if you turn away from it, you add to the guilt of a broken law the insult of a neglected gospel. But if you take the pardon of the gospel on the footing of the gospel, then, such is the efficacy of this great expedient, that it will reach an application of mercy farther than the eye of your own conscience ever reached; that it will redeem you from the guilt even of your most secret and unsuspected iniquities; and thoroughly wash you from a taint of sinfulness, more inveterate than, in the blindness of nature, you ever thought of, or ever conceived to belong to you.

But when a man becomes a believer, there are two great events which take place at this great turning point in his history. One of them takes place in heaven—even the expunging of his name from the book of condemnation. Another of them takes place on earth—even the application of such a sanctifying influence to his person, that all old things are done away with him, and all things become new with him. He is made the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. He is not merely forgiven the sin of every one evil work of which he had aforetime been guilty, but he is created anew unto the corresponding good work. And, therefore, if a Christian, will his honesty be purified from that taint of selfishness by which the general honesty of this world is so deeply and extensively pervaded. He will not do this good thing, that any good thing may be done unto him again. He will do it on a simple regard to its own native and independent rectitude. He will do it because it is honourable, and because God wills him so to adorn the doctrine of his Saviour. All his fair dealing, and all his friendship, will be fair dealing and friendship without interest. The principle that is in him will stand in no need of aid from any such auxiliary—but, strong in its own unborrowed resources, will it impress a legible stamp of dignity and uprightness on the whole variety of his transactions in the world. All men find it their advantage, by the integrity of their dealings, to prolong the existence of some gainful fellowship into which they may have entered. But with him, the same unsullied integrity which

kept this fellowship together, and sustained the progress of it, will abide with him through its last transactions, and dignify its full and final termination. Most men find, that, without the reverberation of any mischief on their own heads, they could reduce, beneath the point of absolute justice, the charges of taxation. But he has a conscience both towards God, and towards man, which will not let him; and there is a rigid truth in all his returns, a pointed and precise accuracy in all his payments. When hemmed in with circumstances of difficulty, and evidently tottering to his fall, the demand of nature is, that he should ply his every artifice to secrete a provision for his family. But a Christian mind is incapable of artifice; and the voice of conscience within him will ever be louder than the voice of necessity; and he will be open as day with his creditors, nor put forth his hand to that which is rightfully theirs, any more than he would put forth his hand to the perpetration of a sacrilege; and though released altogether from that tie of interest which binds a man to equity with his fellows, yet the tie of principle will remain with him in all its strength. Nor will it ever be found that he, for the sake of subsistence, will enter into fraud, seeing that, as one of the children of light, he would not, to gain the whole world, lose his own soul.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE GUILT OF DISHONESTY NOT TO BE ESTIMATED BY THE GAIN OF IT.

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."—LUKE xvi. 10.

IT is the fine poetical conception of a late poetical countryman, whose fancy too often grovelled among the despicable of human character—but who, at the same time, was capable of exhibiting, either in pleasing or in proud array, both the tender and the noble of human character—when he says of the man who carried a native unborrowed self-sustained rectitude in his bosom, that "his eye, even turned on empty space, beamed keen with honour." It was affirmed, in the last discourse, that much of the honourable practice of the world rested on the substratum of selfishness; that society was held together in the exercise of its relative virtues, mainly, by the tie of reciprocal advantage; that a man's own interest bound him to all those average equities which obtained in the neighbourhood around him; and in which, if he proved himself to be glaringly deficient, he would be abandoned by the respect, and the confidence, and the good will, of the people with whom he had to do. It is a melancholy thought, how little the semblance of virtue upon earth betokens the real and

substantial presence of virtuous principle among men. But, on the other hand, though it be a rare, there cannot be a more dignified attitude of the soul, than when of itself it kindles with a sense of justice, and the holy flame is fed, as it were, by its own energies; than when man moves onwards in an unchanging course of moral magnanimity, and disdains the aid of those inferior principles by which gross and sordid humanity is kept from all the grosser violations; than when he rejoices in truth as his kindred and congenial element;—so, that though unpeopled of all its terrestial accompaniments; though he saw no interest whatever to be associated with its fulfilment; though without one prospect either of fame or of emolument before him, would his eye, even when turned on emptiness itself, still retain the living lustre that had been lighted up in it, by a feeling of inward and independent reverence.

It has already been observed, and that fully and frequently enough, that a great part of the homage which is rendered to integrity in the world, is due to the operation of selfishness. And this substantially is the reason, why the principle of the text has so very slender a hold upon the human conscience. Man is ever prone to estimate the enormity of injustice, by the degree in which he suffers from it. He brings this moral question to the standard of his own interest. A master will bear with all the lesser liberties of his servants, so long as he feels them to be harmless; and it is not till he is awakened to the apprehension of personal injury from the amount or frequency of the

embezzlements, that his moral indignation is at all sensibly awakened. And thus it is, that the maxim of our great Teacher of righteousness seems to be very much unfelt, or forgotten, in society. Unfaithfulness in that which is little, and unfaithfulness in that which is much, are very far from being regarded, as they were by him under the same aspect of criminality. If there be no great hurt, it is felt that there is no great harm. The innocence of a dishonest freedom in respect of morality, is rated by its insignificance in respect of matter. The margin which separates the right from the wrong is remorselessly trodden under foot, so long as each makes only a minute and gentle encroachment beyond the landmark of his neighbour's territory. On this subject there is a loose and popular estimate, which is not at one with the deliverance of the New Testament; a habit of petty invasion on the side of aggressors, which is scarcely felt by them to be at all iniquitous—and even on the part of those who are thus made free with there is a habit of loose and careless toleration. There is, in fact, a negligence or a dormancy of principle among men, which causes this sort of injustice to be easily practised on the one side, and as easily put up with on the other; and, in a general slackness of observation, is this virtue, in its strictness and in its delicacy, completely overborne.

It is the taint of selfishness, then, which has so marred and corrupted the moral sensibility of our world. And the man, if such a man can be, whose "eye, even turned on empty space, beams keen

with honour;" and whose homage, therefore, to the virtue of justice, is altogether freed from the mixture of unworthy and interested feelings, will alone render to her, in every instance, a faultless and a completed offering. Whatever his forbearance to others, he could not suffer the slightest blot of corruption upon any doings of his own. He cannot be satisfied with any thing short of the very last jot and tittle of the requirements of equity being fulfilled. He not merely shares in the revolt of the general world against such outrageous departures from the rule of right, as would carry in their train the ruin of acquaintances or the distress of families. Such is the delicacy of the principle within him, that he could not have peace under the consciousness even of the minutest and least discoverable violation. He looks fully and fearlessly at the whole account which justice has against him; and he cannot rest, so long as there is a single article unmet, or a single demand unsatisfied. If, in any transaction of his, there was so much as a farthing of secret and injurious reservation on his side, this would be to him like an accursed thing, which marred the character of the whole proceeding, and spread over it such an aspect of evil, as to offend and to disturb him. He could not bear the whisperings of his own heart, if it told him, that, in so much as by one iota of defect, he had balanced the matter unfairly between himself and the unconscious individual with whom he deals. It would lie a burden upon his mind to hurt and to make him unhappy, till the opportunity of explanation had come round, and he had

obtained ease to his conscience, by acquitting himself to the full of all his obligations. It is justice in the uprightness of her attitude; it is justice in the onwardness of her path; it is justice disdaining every advantage that would tempt her, by ever so little, to the right or to the left; it is justice spurning the littleness of each paltry enticement away from her, and maintaining herself, without deviation, in a track so purely rectilineal, that even the most jealous and microscopic eye could not find in it the slightest aberration: this is the justice set forth by our great moral Teacher in the passage now submitted to you; and by which we are told, that this virtue refuses fellowship with every degree of iniquity that is perceptible; and that, were the very least act of unfaithfulness admitted, she would feel as if in her sanctity she had been violated, as if in her character she had sustained an overthrow.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, let us first attempt to elucidate the principle of our text, and then urge it onward to its practical consequences—both as it respects our general relation to God, and as it respects the particular lesson of faithfulness that may be educed from it.

I. The great principle of the text is, that he who has sinned, though to a small amount in respect of the fruit of his transgression—provided he has done so, by passing over a forbidden limit which was distinctly known to him, has, in the act of doing so, incurred a full condemnation in respect of the principle of his transgression. In one word, that the gain of it may be small, while the guilt of

it may be great; that the latter ought not to be measured by the former; but that he who is unfaithful in the least, shall be dealt with, in respect of the offence he has given to God, in the same way as if he had been unfaithful in much.

The first reason which we would assign in vindication of this is, that, by a small act of injustice, the line which separates the right from the wrong, is just as effectually broken over as by a great act of injustice. There is a tendency in gross and corporeal man to rate the criminality of injustice by the amount of its appropriations—to reduce it to a computation of weight and of measure—to count the man who has gained a double sum by his dishonesty, to be doubly more dishonest than his neighbour—to make it an affair of product rather than of principle; and thus to weigh the morality of a character in the same arithmetical balance with number or with magnitude. Now, this is not the rule of calculation on which our Saviour has proceeded in the text. He speaks to the man who is only half an inch within the limits of forbidden ground, in the very same terms by which he addresses the man who has made the farthest and the largest incursions upon it. It is true, that he is only a little way upon the wrong side of the line of demarcation. But why is he upon it at all? It was in the act of crossing that line, and not in the act of going onwards after he had crossed it—it was then that the contest between right and wrong was entered upon, and then it was decided. That was the instant of time at which principle struck her surrender. The great pull

which the man had to make, was in the act of overleaping the fence of separation; and after that was done, justice had no other barrier by which to obstruct his progress over the whole extent of the field which she had interdicted. There might be barriers of a different description. There might be still a revolting of humanity against the sufferings that would be inflicted by an act of larger fraud or depredation. There might be a dread of exposure, if the dishonesty should so swell, in point of amount, as to become more noticeable. There might, after the absolute limit between justice and injustice is broken, be another limit against the extending of a man's encroachments, in a terror of discovery, or in a sense of interest, or even in the relentings of a kindly or a compunctious feeling towards him who is the victim of injustice. But this is not the limit with which the question of a man's truth, or a man's honesty, has to do. These have already been given up. He may only be a little way within the margin of the unlawful territory, but still he is upon it; and the God who finds him there will reckon with him, and deal with him accordingly. Other principles, and other considerations, may restrain his progress to the very heart of the territory, but justice is not one of them. This he deliberately flung away from him, at that moment when he passed the line of circumvallation; and, though in the neighbourhood of that line, he may hover all his days at the petty work of picking and purloining such fragments as he meets with, though he may never venture himself to a place of more daring or distinguished

atrocity, God sees of him, that, in respect of the principle of justice, at least, there is an utter unhingement. And thus it is, that the Saviour, who knew what was in man, and who, therefore, knew all the springs of that moral machinery by which he is actuated, pronounces of him who was unfaithful in the least, that he was unfaithful also in much.

After the transition is accomplished, the progress will follow of course, just as opportunity invites, and just as circumstances make it safe and practicable. For it is not with justice as it is with generosity, and some of the other virtues. There is not the same graduation in the former as there is in the latter. The man who, other circumstances being equal, gives away a double sum in charity, may, with more propriety, be reckoned doubly more generous than his neighbour; than the man who, with the same equality of circumstances, only ventures on half the extent of fraudulency, can be reckoned only one half as unjust as his neighbour. Each has broken a clear line of demarcation. Each has transgressed a distinct and visible limit which he knew to be forbidden. Each has knowingly forced a passage beyond his neighbour's landmark—and that is the place where justice has laid the main force of her interdict. As it respects the *materiel* of injustice, the question resolves itself into a mere computation of quantity. As it respects the *morale* of injustice, the computation is upon other principles. It is upon the latter that our Saviour pronounces himself. And he gives us to understand, that a very

humble degree of the former may indicate the latter in all its atrocity. He stands on the breach between the lawful and the unlawful; and he tells us, that the man who enters by a single footstep on the forbidden ground, immediately gathers upon his person the full hue and character of guiltiness. He admits no extenuation of the lesser acts of dishonesty. He does not make right pass into wrong, by a gradual melting of the one into the other. He does not thus obliterate the distinctions of morality. There is no shading off at the margin of guilt, but a clear and vigorous delineation. It is not by a gentle transition that a man steps over from honesty to dishonesty. There is between them a wall rising up unto heaven; and the high authority of heaven must be stormed, ere one inch of entrance can be made into the region of iniquity. The morality of the Saviour never leads him to gloss over beginnings of crime. His object ever is, as in the text before us, to fortify the limit, to cast a rampart of exclusion around the whole territory of guilt, and to rear it before the eye of man in such characters of strength and sacredness, as should make them feel that it is impregnable.

The second reason, why he who is unfaithful in the least has incurred the condemnation of him who is unfaithful in much, is, that the littleness of the gain, so far from giving a littleness to the guilt, is in fact a circumstance of aggravation. There is just this difference. He who has committed injustice for the sake of a less advantage, has done it on the impulse of a less temptation. He has parted with his honesty at an inferior

price; and this circumstance may go so to equalize the estimate, as to bring it very much to one with the deliverance, in the text, of our great Teacher of righteousness. The limitation between good and evil stood as distinctly before the notice of the small as of the great depredator; and he has just made as direct a contravention to the first reason, when he passed over upon the wrong side of it. And he may have made little of gain by the enterprise, but this does not allay the guilt of it. Nay, by the second reason, this may serve to aggravate the wrath of the Divinity against him. It proves how small the price is which he sets upon his eternity, and how cheaply he can bargain the favour of God away from him, and how low he rates the good of an inheritance with him, and for what a trifle he can dispose of all interest in his kingdom and in his promises. The very circumstance which gives to his character a milder transgression in the eyes of the world, makes it more odious in the judgment of the sanctuary. The more paltry it is in respect of profit, the more profane it may be in respect of principle. It likens him the more to profane Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. And thus it is, indeed, most woful to think of such a senseless and alienated world; and how heedlessly the men of it are posting their infatuated way to destruction; and how, for as little gain as might serve them a day, they are contracting as much guilt as will ruin them for ever; and are profoundly asleep in the midst of such designs and such doings, as will form the valid materials of their entire and everlasting condemnation.

It is with argument such as this that we would try to strike conviction among a very numerous class of offenders in society—those who, in the various departments of trust, or service, or agency, are ever practising, in littles, at the work of secret appropriation—those whose hands are in a state of constant defilement, by the putting of them forth to that which they ought to touch not, and taste not, and handle not—those who silently number such pilferments as can pass unnoticed among the perquisites of their office; and who, by an excess in their charges, just so slight as to escape detection, or by a habit of purloining, just so restrained as to elude discovery, have both a conscience very much at ease in their own bosoms, and a credit very fair, and very entire, among their acquaintances around them. They grossly count upon the smallness of their transgression. But they are just going in a small way to hell. They would recoil with violent dislike from the act of a midnight depredator. It is just because terrors, and trials, and executions, have thrown around it the pomp and the circumstance of guilt. But at another bar, and on a day of more dreadful solemnity, their guilt will be made to stand out in its essential characters, and their condemnation will be pronounced from the lips of Him who judgeth righteously. They feel that they have incurred no outrageous forfeiture of character among men, and this instils a treacherous complacency into their own hearts. But the piercing eye of Him who looketh down from heaven is upon the reality of the question; and He who ponders

the secrets of every bosom, can perceive, that the man who recoils only from such a degree of injustice as is notorious, may have no justice whatever in his character. He may have a sense of reputation. He may have the fear of detection and disgrace. He may feel a revolt in his constitution against the magnitude of a gross and glaring violation. He may even share in all the feelings and principles of that conventional kind of morality which obtains in his neighbourhood. But, of that principle which is surrendered by the least act of unfaithfulness, he has no share whatever. He perceives no overawing sacredness in that boundary which separates the right from the wrong. If he only keep decently near, it is a matter of indifference to him whether he be on this or on that side of it. He can be unfaithful in that which is least. There may be other principles, and other considerations, to restrain him; but certain it is, that it is not now the principle of justice which restrains him from being unfaithful in much. This is given up; and, through a blindness to the great and important principle of our text, this virtue may, in its essential character, be as good as banished from the world. All its protections may be utterly overthrown. The line of defence is effaced by which it ought to have been firmly and scrupulously guarded. The sign-posts of intimation, which ought to warn and to scare away, are planted along the barrier; and when, in defiance to them, the barrier is broken, man will not be checked by any sense of honesty, at least, from expatiating over the whole of the forbidden territory. And

thus may we gather from the countless peccadilloes which are so current in the various departments of trade, and service, and agency—from the secret freedoms in which many do indulge, without one remonstrance from their own hearts—from the petty inroads that are daily practised on the confines of justice, by which its line of demarcation is trodden under foot, and it has lost the moral distinctness, and the moral charm, that should have kept it unviolate—from the exceeding multitude of such offences as are frivolous in respect of the matter of them, but most fearfully important in respect of the principle in which they originate—from the woful amount of that unseen and unrecorded guilt which escapes the cognizance of human law, but, on the application of the touchstone in our text, may be made to stand out in characters of severest condemnation—from instances, too numerous to repeat, but certainly too obvious to be missed, even by the observation of charity, may we gather the frailty of human principle, and the virulence of that moral poison, which is now in such full circulation to taint and to adulterate the character of our species.

Before finishing this branch of our subject, we may observe, that it is with this, as with many other phenomena of the human character, that we are not long in contemplation upon it, without coming in sight of that great characteristic of fallen man, which meets and forces itself upon us in every view that we take of him—even the great moral disease of ungodliness. It is at the precise limit between the right and the wrong that the

flaming sword of God's law is placed. It is there that "Thus saith the Lord" presents itself, in legible characters, to our view. It is there where the operation of His commandment begins; and not at any of those higher gradations, where a man's dishonesty first appals himself by the chance of its detection, or appals others by the mischief and insecurity which it brings upon social life. An extensive fraud upon the revenue, for example, unpopular as this branch of justice is, would bring a man down from his place of eminence and credit in mercantile society. That petty fraud which is associated with so many of those smaller payments, where a lie in the written acknowledgment is both given and accepted, as a way of escape from the legal imposition, circulates at large among the members of the great trading community. In the former, and in all the greater cases of injustice, there is a human restraint, and a human terror, in operation. There is disgrace and civil punishment to scare away. There are all the sanctions of that conventional morality which is suspended on the fear of man, and the opinion of man; and which, without so much as the recognition of a God, would naturally point its armour against every outrage that could sensibly disturb the securities and the rights of human society. But so long as the disturbance is not sensible—so long as the injustice keeps within the limits of smallness and secrecy—so long as it is safe for the individual to practise it, and, borne along on the tide of general example and connivance, he has nothing to restrain him but that distinct and inflexible word of God,

which proscribes all unfaithfulness, and admits of it in no degrees, and no modifications—then, let the almost universal sleep of conscience attest, how little of God there is in the virtue of this world; and how much the peace and the protection of society are owing to such moralities, as the mere selfishness of man would lead him to ordain, even in a community of atheists.

II. Let us now attempt to unfold a few of the practical consequences that may be drawn from the principle of the text, both in respect to our general relation with God, and in respect to the particular lesson of faithfulness which may be educed from it.

1. There cannot be a stronger possible illustration of our argument, than the very first act of retribution that occurred in the history of our species. "And God said unto Adam, Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. For in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. But the woman took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." What is it that invests the eating of a solitary apple with a grandeur so momentous? How came an action, in itself so minute, to be the germ of such mighty consequences? How are we to understand that our first parents, by the doing of a single instant, not only brought death upon themselves, but shed this big and baleful disaster over all their posterity? We may not be able to answer all these questions; but we may at least learn, what a thing of danger it is, under the government of a holy and inflexible

God, to tamper with the limits of obedience. By the eating of that apple a clear requirement was broken, and a distinct transition was made from loyalty to rebellion, and an entrance was effected into the region of sin—and thus did this one act serve like the opening of a gate for a torrent of mighty mischief; and, if the act itself was a trifle, it just went to aggravate its guilt—that, for such a trifle, the authority of God could be despised and trampled on. At all events, His attribute of Truth stood committed to the fulfilment of the threatening; and the very insignificancy of the deed, which provoked the execution of it, gives a sublimer character to the certainty of the fulfilment. We know how much this trait, in the dealings of God with man, has been the jeer of infidelity. But in all this ridicule, there is truly nothing else than the grossness of materialism. Had Adam, instead of plucking one single apple from the forbidden tree, been armed with the power of a malignant spirit, and spread a wanton havock over the face of paradise, and spoiled the garden of its loveliness, and been able to mar and to deform the whole of that terrestrial creation over which God had so recently rejoiced—the punishment he sustained would have looked, to these arithmetical moralists, a more adequate return for the offence of which he had been guilty. They cannot see how the moral lesson rises in greatness, just in proportion to the humility of the material accompaniments—and how it wraps a sublimer glory around the holiness of the Godhead—and how from the transaction, such as it is, the conclusion

cometh forth more nakedly, and, therefore, more impressively, that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lawgiver. God said, "Let there be light, and it was light;" and it has ever been regarded as a sublime token of the Deity, that, from an utterance so simple, an accomplishment so quick and so magnificent should have followed. God said, "That he who eateth of the tree in the midst of the garden should die." It appears, indeed, but a little thing, that one should put forth his hand to an apple and taste of it. But a saying of God was involved in the matter; and heaven and earth must pass away, ere a saying of his can pass away; and so the apple became decisive of the fate of a world; and, out of the very scantiness of the occasion, did there emerge a sublimer display of truth and of holiness. The beginning of the world was, indeed, the period of great manifestations of the Godhead; and they all seem to accord, in style and character, with each other; and in that very history, which has called forth the profane and unthinking levity of many a scorner, may we behold as much of the majesty of principle, as, in the creation of light, we behold of the majesty of power.

But this history furnishes the materials of a contemplation still more practical. If, for this one offence, Adam and his posterity have been so visited—if so rigorously and so inflexibly precise be the spirit of God's administration—if, under the economy of heaven, sin, even in the very humblest of its exhibitions, be the object of an intolerance so jealous and so unrelenting—if the Deity be such

as this transaction manifests Him to be, disdainful of fellowship even with the very least iniquity, and dreadful in the certainty of all his accomplishments against it—if, for a single transgression, all the promise and all the felicity of paradise had to be broken up, and the wretched offenders had to be turned abroad upon a world, now changed by the curse into a wilderness, and their secure and lovely home of innocence behoved to be abandoned, and to keep them out a flaming sword had to turn every way, and guard their reaccess to the bowers of immortality—if sin be so very hateful in the eye of unspotted holiness, that, on its very first act, and first appearance, the wonted communion between heaven and earth was interdicted—if that was the time at which God looked on our species with an altered countenance, and one deed of disobedience proved so terribly decisive of the fate and history of a world—what should each individual amongst us think of his own danger, whose life has been one continued habit of disobedience? If we be still in the hands of that God who laid so fell a condemnation on this one transgression, let us just think of our many transgressions, and that every hour we live multiplies the account of them; and that, however they may vanish from our own remembrance, they are still alive in the records of a judge whose eye and whose memory never fail Him. Let us transfer the lesson we have gotten of heaven's jurisprudence from the case of our first parents to our own case. Let us compare our lives with the law of God, and we shall find that our sins are past reckoning. Let us

take account of the habitual posture of our souls, as a posture of dislike for the things that are above, and we shall find that our thoughts and our desires are ever running in one current of sinfulness. Let us just make the computation how often we fail in the bidden charity, and the bidden godliness, and the bidden long-suffering—all as clearly bidden as the duty that was laid on our first parents—and we shall find, that we are borne down under a mountain of iniquity; that, in the language of the Psalmist, our transgressions have gone over our heads, and, as a heavy burden, are too heavy for us; and if we be indeed under the government of Him who followed up the offence of the stolen apple by so dreadful a chastisement, then is wrath gone out unto the uttermost against every one of us. There is something in the history of that apple which might be brought specially to bear on the case of those small sinners who practise in secret at the work of their petty depredations. But it also carries in it a great and a universal moral. It tells us that no sin is small. It serves a general purpose of conviction. It holds out a most alarming disclosure of the charge that is against us; and makes it manifest to the conscience of him who is awakened thereby, that, unless God Himself point out a way of escape, we are indeed most hopelessly sunk in condemnation. And, seeing that such wrath went out from the sanctuary of this unchangeable God, on the one offence of our first parents, it irresistibly follows, that if we, manifold in guilt, take not ourselves to His appointed way of reconciliation—if we refuse the overtures of

Him, who then so visited the one offence through which all are dead, but is now laying before us all that free gift, which is of many offences unto justification—in other words, if we will not enter into peace through the offered Mediator, how much greater must be the wrath that abideth on us?

Now, let the sinner have his conscience schooled by such a contemplation, and there will be no rest whatever for his soul till he find it in the Saviour. Let him only learn, from the dealings of God with the first Adam, what a God of holiness he himself has to deal with; and let him further learn, from the history of the second Adam, that, to manifest himself as a God of love, another righteousness had to be brought in, in place of that from which man had fallen so utterly away. There was a faultless obedience rendered by Him, of whom it is said, that He fulfilled all righteousness. There was a magnifying of the law by one in human form, who, up to the last jot and tittle of it, acquitted Himself of all its obligations. There was a pure, and lofty, and undefiled path, trodden by a holy and harmless Being, who gave not up His work upon earth, till, ere He left it, He could cry out, that It was finished; and so had wrought out for us a perfect righteousness. Now, it forms the most prominent annunciation of the New Testament, that the reward of this righteousness is offered unto all—so that there is not one of us who is not put by the gospel upon the alternative of being either tried by our own merits, or treated according to the merits of Him who became sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be

made the righteousness of God in Him. Let the sinner just look unto himself, and look unto the Saviour. Let him advert not to his one, but to his many offences; and that, too, in the sight of a God, who, but for one so slight and so insignificant in respect of the outward description, as the eating of a forbidden apple, threw off a world into banishment, and entailed a sentence of death upon all its generations. Let him learn from this, that for sin, even in its humblest degrees, there exists in the bosom of the Godhead no toleration; and how shall he dare, with the degree and the frequency of his own sin, to stand any longer on a ground, where, if he remain, the fierceness of a consuming fire is so sure to overtake him? The righteousness of Christ is without a flaw, and there he is invited to take shelter. Under the actual regimen, which God has established in our world, it is indeed his only security—his refuge from the tempest, and hiding place from the storm. The only beloved son offers to spread His own unspotted garment as a protection over him; and, if he be rightly alive to the utter nakedness of his moral and spiritual condition, he will indeed make no tarrying till he be found in Christ, and find that in Him there is no condemnation.

Now, it is worthy of remark, that those principles, which shut a man up unto the faith, do not take flight and abandon him, after they have served this temporary purpose. They abide with him, and work their appropriate influence on his character, and serve as the germ of a new moral creation; and we can afterwards detect their operation in his

heart and life; so, that if they were present at the formation of a saving belief, they are not less unfailingly present with every true Christian, throughout the whole of his future history, as the elements of a renovated conduct. If it was sensibility to the evil of sin which helped to wean the man from himself, and led him to his Saviour, this sensibility does not fall asleep in the bosom of an awakened sinner, after Christ has given him light —but it grows with the growth, and strengthens with the strength, of his Christianity. If, at the interesting period of his transition from nature to grace, he saw, even in the very least of his offences, a deadly provocation of the Lawgiver, he does not lose sight of this consideration in his future progress —nor does it barely remain with him, like one of the unproductive notions of an inert and unproductive theory. It gives rise to a fearful jealousy in his heart of the least appearance of evil; and, with every man who has undergone a genuine process of conversion, do we behold the scrupulous avoidance of sin, in its most slender, as well as in its more aggravated forms. If it was the perfection of the character of Christ who felt that it became Him to fulfil all righteousness, that offered him the first solid foundation on which he could lean—then, the same character, which first drew his eye for the purpose of confidence, still continues to draw his eye for the purpose of imitation. At the outset of faith, all the essential moralities of thought, and feeling, and conviction, are in play; nor is there any thing in the progress of a real faith which is calculated to throw them back again

into the dormancy out of which they had arisen. They break out, in fact, into more full and flourishing display on every new creature, with every new step, and new evolution, in his mental history. All the principles of the gospel serve, as it were, to fan and to perpetuate his hostility against sin; and all the powers of the gospel enable him, more and more, to fulfil the desires of his heart, and to carry his purposes of hostility into execution. In the case of every genuine believer, who walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit, do we behold a fulfilling of the righteousness of the law—a strenuous avoidance of sin, in its slightest possible taint or modification—a strenuous performance of duty, up to the last jot and tittle of its exactions—so, that let the untrue professors of the faith do what they will in the way of antinomianism, and let the enemies of the faith say what they will about our antinomianism, the real spirit of the dispensation under which we live is such, that whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, is accounted the least—whosoever shall do and teach them is accounted the greatest.

2. Let us, therefore, urge the spirit and the practice of this lesson upon your observation. The place for the practice of it is the familiar and week-day scene. The principle for the spirit of it descends upon the heart, from the sublimest heights of the sanctuary of God. It is not vulgarizing Christianity to bring it down to the very humblest occupations of human life. It is, in fact, dignifying human life, by bringing it up to the

level of Christianity. It may look to some a degradation of the pulpit, when the household servant is told to make her firm stand against the temptation of open doors, and secret opportunities; or when the confidential agent is told to resist the slightest inclination to any unseen freedom with the property of his employers, or to any undiscoverable excess in the charges of his management; or when the receiver of a humble payment is told, that the tribute which is due on every written acknowledgment ought faithfully to be met, and not fictitiously to be evaded. This is not robbing religion of its sacredness, but spreading its sacredness over the face of society. It is evangelizing human life, by impregnating its minutest transactions with the spirit of the gospel. It is strengthening the wall of partition between sin and obedience. It is the teacher of righteousness taking his stand at the outpost of that territory which he is appointed to defend, and warning his hearers of the danger that lies in a single footstep of encroachment. It is letting them know, that it is in the act of stepping over the limit, that the sinner throws the gauntlet of his defiance against the authority of God. And though he may deceive himself with the imagination that his soul is safe, because the gain of his injustice is small, such is the God with whom he has to do, that, if it be gain to the value of a single apple, then, within the compass of so small an outward dimension, may as much guilt be enclosed as that which hath brought death into our world, and carried it down in a descending ruin upon all its generations.

It may appear a very little thing, when you are told to be honest in little matters; when the servant is told to keep her hand from every one article about which there is not an express or understood allowance on the part of her superiors; when the dealer is told to lop off the excesses of that minuter fraudulency, which is so currently practised in the humble walks of merchandise; when the workman is told to abstain from those petty reservations of the material of his work, for which he is said to have such snug and ample opportunity; and when, without pronouncing on the actual extent of these transgressions, all are told to be faithful in that which is least, else, if there be truth in our text, they incur the guilt of being unfaithful in much. It may be thought, that because such dishonesties as these are scarcely noticeable, they are therefore not worthy of notice. But it is just in the proportion of their being unnoticeable by the human eye, that it is religious to refrain from them. These are the cases in which it will be seen, whether the control of the omniscience of God makes up for the control of human observation—in which the sentiment, that thou God seest me, should carry a preponderance through all the secret places of a man's history—in which, when every earthly check of an earthly morality is withdrawn, it should be felt, that the eye of God is upon him, and that the judgment of God is in reserve for him. To him who is gifted with a true discernment of these matters, will it appear, that often, in proportion to the smallness of the doings, is the sacredness of that principle which causes

them to be done with integrity; that honesty, in little transactions, bears upon it more of the aspect of holiness, than honesty in great ones; that the man of deepest sensibility to the obligations of the law, is he who feels the quickening of moral alarm at its slightest violations; that, in the morality of grains and of scruples, there may be a greater tenderness of conscience, and a more heaven-born sanctity, than in that larger morality which flashes broadly and observably upon the world;—and that thus, in the faithfulness of the household maid, or of the apprentice boy, there may be the presence of a truer principle, than there is in the more conspicuous transactions of human business—what they do, being done, not with eye-service—what they do, being done unto the Lord.

And here we remark, that nobleness of condition is not essential as a school for nobleness of character; nor does man require to be high in office, ere he can gather around his person the worth and the lustre of a high-minded integrity. It is delightful to think, that humble life may be just as rich in moral grace, and moral grandeur, as the loftier places of society; that as true a dignity of principle may be earned by him who, in homeliest drudgery, plies his conscientious task, as by him who stands entrusted with the fortunes of an empire; that the poorest menial in the land, who can lift a hand unsoiled by the pilferments that are within his reach, may have achieved a victory over temptation, to the full as honourable as the proudest patriot can boast, who has spurned the bribery of courts away from him. It is cheering to know, from the

heavenly judge Himself, that he who is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much; and that thus, among the labours of the field and of the work-shop, it is possible for the peasant to be as bright in honour as the peer, and have the chivalry of as much truth and virtue to adorn him.

And, as this lesson is not little in respect of principle, so neither is it little in respect of influence on the order and well-being of human society. He who is unjust in the least, is, in respect of guilt, unjust also in much. And to reverse this proposition, as it is done in the first clause of our text—he who is faithful in that which is least, is, in respect both of righteous principle and of actual observation, faithful also in much. Who is the man to whom I would most readily confide the whole of my property? He who would most disdain to put forth an injurious hand on a single farthing of it. Who is the man from whom I would have the least dread of any unrighteous encroachment? He, all the delicacies of whose principle are awakened, when he comes within sight of the limit which separates the region of justice from the region of injustice. Who is the man whom we shall never find among the greater degrees of iniquity? He who shrinks with sacred abhorrence from the lesser degrees of it. It is a true, though a homely maxim of economy, that if we take care of our small sums, our great sums will take care of themselves. And, to pass from our own things to the things of others, it is no less true, that if principle should lead us all to maintain the care of strictest honesty over our neighbour's

pennies, then will his pounds lie secure from the grasp of injustice, behind the barrier of a moral impossibility. This lesson, if carried into effect among you, would so strengthen all the ramparts of security between man and man, as to make them utterly impassable; and therefore, while, in the matter of it, it may look, in one view, as one of the least of the commandments, it, in regard both of principle and of effect, is, in another view of it, one of the greatest of the commandments. And we therefore conclude with assuring you, that nothing will spread the principle of this commandment to any great extent throughout the mass of society, but the principle of godliness. Nothing will secure the general observation of justice amongst us, in its punctuality and in its preciseness, but such a precise Christianity as many affirm to be puritanical. In other words, the virtues of society, to be kept in a healthful and prosperous condition, must be upheld by the virtues of the sanctuary. Human law may restrain many of the grosser violations. But without religion among the people, justice will never be in extensive operation as a moral principle. A vast proportion of the species will be as unjust as the vigilance and the severities of law allow them to be. A thousand petty dishonesties, which never will, and never can be brought within the cognizance of any of our courts of administration, will still continue to derange the business of human life, and to stir up all the heartburnings of suspicion and resentment among the members of human society. And it is, indeed, a triumphant reversion awaiting the

Christianity of the New Testament, when it shall become manifest as day, that it is her doctrine alone, which, by its searching and sanctifying influence, can so moralise our world—as that each may sleep secure in the lap of his neighbour's integrity, and the charm of confidence, between man and man, will at length be felt in the business of every town, and in the bosom of every family.

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE GREAT CHRISTIAN LAW OF RECIPROCITY BETWEEN MAN AND MAN.

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."—MATT. vii. 12.

THERE are two great classes in human society, between whom there lie certain mutual claims and obligations, which are felt by some to be of very difficult adjustment. There are those who have requests of some kind or other to make; and there are those to whom the requests are made, and with whom there is lodged the power either to grant or to refuse them. Now, at first sight, it would appear, that the firm exercise of this power of refusal is the only barrier by which the latter class can be secured against the indefinite encroachments of the former; and that, if this were removed, all the safeguards of right and property would be removed along with it. The power of refusal, on the part of those who have the right of refusal, may be abolished by an act of violence, on the part of those who have it not; and then, when this happens in individual cases, we have the crimes of assault and robbery; and when it happens on a more extended scale, we have anarchy and insurrection in the land. Or the power of refusal may be taken away by an authoritative precept of

religion; and then might it still be matter of apprehension, lest our only defence against the inroads of selfishness and injustice were as good as given up, and lest the peace and interest of families should be laid open to a most fearful exposure, by the enactments of a romantic and impracticable system. Whenever this is apprehended, the temptation is strongly felt, either to rid ourselves of the enactments altogether, or at least to bring them down in nearer accommodation to the feelings and the conveniencies of men.

And Christianity, on the very first blush of it, appears to be precisely such a religion. It seems to take away all lawfulness of resistance from the possessor, and to invest the demander with such an extent of privilege, as would make the two classes of society to which we have just now adverted, speedily change places. And this is the true secret of the many laborious deviations that have been attempted, in this branch of morality, on the obvious meaning of the New Testament. This is the secret of those many qualifying clauses, by which its most luminous announcements have been beset, to the utter darkening of them. This it is which explains the many sad invasions that have been made on the most manifest and undeniable literalities of the law and of the testimony. And our present text, among others, has received its full share of mutilation, and of what may be called "dressing up," from the hands of commentators—it having wakened the very alarms of which we have just spoken, and called forth the very attempts to quiet and to subdue them.

Surely, it has been said, we can never be required to do unto others what they have no right, and no reason, to expect from us. The demand must not be an extravagant one. It must lie within the limits of moderation. It must be such as, in the estimation of every justly thinking person, is counted fair in the circumstances of the case. The principle on which our Saviour, in the text, rests the obligation of doing any particular thing to others, is, that we wish others to do that thing unto us. But this is too much for an affrighted selfishness; and, for her own protection, she would put forth a defensive sophistry upon the subject; and in place of that distinctly announced principle, on which the Bible both directs and specifies what the things are which we should do unto others, does she substitute another principle entirely—which is, merely to do unto others such things as are fair, and right, and reasonable.

Now, there is one clause of this verse which would appear to lay a positive interdict on all these qualifications. How shall we dispose of a phrase, so sweeping and universal in its import, as that of "all things whatsoever?" We cannot think that such an expression as this was inserted for nothing, by him who has told us, that "cursed is every one who taketh away from the words of this book." There is no distinction laid down between things fair, and things unfair—between things reasonable and things unreasonable. Both are comprehended in the "all things whatsoever." The signification is plain and absolute, that, let the thing be what it may, if you wish others to do

that thing for you, it lies imperatively upon you to do the very same thing for them also.

But, at this rate, you may think that the whole system of human intercourse would go into unhingement. You may wish your next-door neighbour to present you with half his fortune. In this case, we know not how you are to escape from the conclusion, that you are bound to present him with the half of yours. Or you may wish a relative to burden himself with the expenses of all your family. It is then impossible to save you from the positive obligation, if you are equally able for it, of doing the same service to the family of another. Or you may wish to engross the whole time of an acquaintance in personal attendance upon yourself. Then, it is just your part to do the same extent of civility to another who may desire it. These are only a few specifications, out of the manifold varieties, whether of service or of donation, which are conceivable between one man and another; nor are we aware of any artifice of explanation by which they can possibly be detached from the "all things whatsoever" of the verse before us. These are literalities which we are not at liberty to compromise—but are bound to urge, and that simply, according to the terms in which they have been conveyed to us by the great Teacher of righteousness. This may raise a sensitive dread in many a bosom. It may look like the opening of a floodgate, through which a torrent of human rapacity would be made to set in on the fair and measured domains of property, and by which all the fences of legality would be overthrown. It is some such

fearful anticipation as this which causes casuistry to ply its wily expedients, and busily to devise its many limits, and its many exceptions, to the morality of the New Testament. And yet, we think it possible to demonstrate of our text, that no such modifying is requisite; and that, though admitted strictly and rigorously as the rule of our daily conduct, it would lead to no practical conclusions which are at all formidable.

For, what is the precise circumstance which lays the obligation of this precept upon you? There may be other places in the Bible where you are required to do things for the benefit of your neighbour, whether you would wish your neighbour to do these things for your benefit or not. But this is not the requirement here. There is none other thing laid upon you in this place, than that you should do that good action in behalf of another, which you would like that other to do in behalf of yourself. If you would not like him to do it for you, then there is nothing in the compass of this sentence now before you, that at all obligates you to do it for him. If you would not like your neighbour to make so romantic a surrender to your interest, as to offer you to the extent of half his fortune, then there is nothing in that part of the gospel code which now engages us, that renders it imperative upon you to make the same offer to your neighbour. If you would positively recoil, in all the reluctance of ingenuous delicacy, from the selfishness of laying on a relation the burden of the expenses of all your family, then this is not the good office that you would have him to do unto

you; and this, therefore, is not the good office which the text prescribes you to do unto him. If you have such consideration for another's ease, and another's convenience, that you could not take the ungenerous advantage of so much of his time for your accommodation, there may be other verses in the Bible which point to a greater sacrifice, on your part, for the good of others, than you would like these others to make for yours; but, most assuredly, this is not the verse which imposes that sacrifice. If you would not that others should do these things on your account, then these things form no part of the "all things whatsoever" you would that men should do unto you; and, therefore, they form no part of the "all things whatsoever" that you are required, by this verse, to do unto them. The bare circumstance of your positively not wishing that any such services should be rendered unto you, exempts you, as far as the single authority of this precept is concerned, from the obligation of rendering these services to others. This is the limitation to the extent of those services which are called for in the text; and it is surely better, that every limitation to a commandment of God's, should be defined by God himself, than that it should be drawn from the assumptions of human fancy, or from the fears and the feelings of human convenience.

Let a man, in fact, give himself up to a strict and literal observation of the precept in this verse, and it will impress a two-fold direction upon him. It will not only guide him to certain performances of good in behalf of others, but it will guide him to

the regulation of his own desires of good from them. For his desires of good from others are here set up as the measure of his performances of good to others. The more selfish and unbounded his desires are, the larger are those performances with the obligation of which he is burdened. Whatsoever he would that others should do unto him, he is bound to do unto them; and, therefore, the more he gives way to ungenerous and extravagant wishes of service from those who are around him, the heavier and more insupportable is the load of duty which he brings upon himself. The commandment is quite imperative, and there is no escaping from it; and if he, by the excess of his selfishness, should render it impracticable, then the whole punishment, due to the guilt of casting aside the authority of this commandment, follows in that train of punishment which is annexed to selfishness. There is one way of being relieved from such a burden. There is one way of reducing this verse to a moderate and practicable requirement; and that is, just to give up selfishness—just to stifle all ungenerous desires—just to moderate every wish of service or liberality from others, down to the standard of what is right and equitable; and then there may be other verses in the Bible, by which we are called to be kind even to the evil and the unthankful. But, most assuredly, this verse lays upon us none other thing, than that we should do such services for others as are right and equitable.

The more extravagant, then, a man's wishes of accommodation from others are, the wider is the

distance between him and the bidden performances of our text. The separation of him from his duty increases at the rate of two bodies receding from each other by equal and contrary movements. The more selfish his desires of service are from others, the more feeble, on that very account, will be his desires of making any surrender of himself to them, and yet the greater is the amount of that surrender which is due. The poor man, in fact, is moving himself away from the rule; and the rule is just moving as fast away from the man. As he sinks, in the scale of selfishness, beneath the point of a fair and moderate expectation from others, does the rule rise in the scale of duty, with its demands upon him; and thus there is rendered to him double for every unfair and ungenerous imposition that he would make on the kindness of those who are around him.

Now, there is one way, and a very effectual one, of getting these two ends to meet. Moderate your own desires of service from others, and you will moderate, in the same degree, all those duties of service to others which are measured by these desires. Have the delicacy to abstain from any wish of encroachment on the convenience or property of another. Have the high-mindedness to be indebted for your own support to the exertions of your own honourable industry, rather than to the dastardly habit of preying on the simplicity of those around you. Have such a keen sense of equity, and such a fine tone of independent feeling, that you could not bear to be the cause of hardship or distress to a single human creature, if you could

help it. Let the same spirit be in you, which the Apostle wanted to exemplify before the eye of his disciples, when he coveted no man's gold, or silver, or apparel; when he laboured not to be chargeable to any of them; but wrought with his own hands, rather than be burdensome. Let this mind be in you, which was also in the Apostle of the Gentiles; and then, the text before us will not come near you with a single oppressive or impracticable requirement. There may be other passages, where you are called to go beyond the strict line of justice, or common humanity, in behalf of your suffering brethren. But this passage does not touch you with any such preceptive imposition: and you, by moderating your wishes from others down to what is fair and equitable, do, in fact, reduce the rule which binds you to act according to the measure of these wishes, down to a rule of precise and undeviating equity.

The operation is somewhat like that of a governor, or fly, in mechanism. This is a very happy contrivance, by which all that is defective or excessive in the motion, is confined within the limits of equability; and every tendency, in particular, to any mischievous acceleration, is restrained. The impulse given by this verse to the conduct of man among his fellows, would seem, to a superficial observer, to carry him to all the excesses of a most ruinous and quixotic benevolence. But let him only look to the skilful adaptation of the fly. Just suppose the control of moderation and equity to be laid upon his own wishes, and there is not a single impulse given to his conduct beyond the rate of

moderation and equity. You are not required here to do all things whatsoever in behalf of others, but to do all things whatsoever for them, that you would should be done unto yourself. This is the check by which the whole of the bidden movement is governed, and kept from running out into any hurtful excess. And such is the beautiful operation of that piece of moral mechanism that we are now employed in contemplating, that while it keeps down all the aspirations of selfishness, it does, in fact, restrain every extravagancy, and impresses on its obedient subjects no other movement, than that of an even and inflexible justice.

This rule of our Saviour's, then, prescribes moderation to our desires of good from others, as well as generosity to our doings in behalf of others; and makes the first the measure of obligation to the second. It may thus be seen how easily, in a Christian society, the whole work of benevolence could be adjusted, so as to render it possible for the givers not only to meet, but also to overpass, the wishes and expectations of the receivers. The rich man may have a heavier obligation laid upon him by other precepts of the New Testament; but, by this precept, he is not bound to do more for the poor man, than what he himself would wish, in like circumstances, to be done for him. And let the poor man, on the other hand, wish for no more than what a Christian ought to wish for; let him work and endure to the extent of nature's sufferance, rather than beg—and only beg, rather than that he should starve; and in such a state of principle among men, a tide of beneficence would

so go forth upon all the vacant places in society, as that there should be no room to receive it. The duty of the rich, as connected with this administration, is of so direct and positive a character, as to obtrude itself at once on the notice of the Christian moralist. But the poor also have a duty in it—to which we feel ourselves directed by the train of argument which we have now been prosecuting—and a duty, too, we think, of far greater importance even than the other, to the best interests of mankind.

For, let us first contrast the rich man who is ungenerous in his doings, with the poor man who is ungenerous in his desires; and see from which of the two it is, that the cause of charity receives the deadlier infliction. There is, it must be admitted, an individual to be met with occasionally, who represents the former of these two characters; with every affection gravitating to self, and to its sordid gratifications and interests; bent on his own pleasure, or his own avarice—and so engrossed with these, as to have no spare feeling at all for the brethren of his common nature; with a heart obstinately shut against that most powerful of applications, the look of genuine and imploring distress—and whose very countenance speaks a surly and determined exclusion on every call that proceeds from it; who, in a tumult of perpetual alarm about new cases, and new tales of suffering, and new plans of philanthropy, has at length learned to resist and to resent every one of them; and, spurning the whole of this disturbance impatiently away, to maintain a firm defensive over the close system of

his own selfish luxuries, and his own snug accommodations. Such a man keeps back, it must be allowed, from the cause of charity, what he ought to have rendered to it in his own person. There is a diminution of the philanthropic fund, up to the extent of what benevolence would have awarded out of his individual means, and individual opportunities. The good cause is a sufferer, not by any positive blow it has sustained, but by the simple negation of one friendly and fostering hand, that else might have been stretched forth to aid and patronise it. There is only so much less of direct countenance and support, than would otherwise have been; for, in this our age, we have no conception whatever of such an example being at all infectious. For a man to wallow in prosperity himself, and be unmindful of the wretchedness that is around him, is an exhibition of altogether so ungainly a character, that it will far oftener provoke an observer to affront it by the contrast of his own generosity, than to render it the approving testimony of his imitation. So that all we have lost by the man who is ungenerous in his doings, is his own contribution to the cause of philanthropy. And it is a loss that can be borne. The cause of this world's beneficence can do abundantly without him. There is a ground that is yet unbroken, and there are resources which are still unexplored, that will yield a far more substantial produce to the good of humanity, than he, and thousands as wealthy as he, could render to it, out of all their capabilities.

But there is a far wider mischief inflicted on

the cause of charity, by the poor man who is ungenerous in his desires; by him, whom every act of kindness is sure to call out to the reaction of some new demand, or new expectation; by him, on whom the hand of a giver has the effect, not of appeasing his wants, but of inflaming his rapacity; by him who, trading among the sympathies of the credulous, can dexterously appropriate for himself a portion tenfold greater than what would have blest and brightened the aspect of many a deserving family. Him we denounce as the worst enemy of the poor. It is he whose ravenous gripe wrests from them a far more abundant benefaction, than is done by the most lordly and unfeeling proprietor in the land. He is the arch-oppressor of his brethren; and the amount of the robbery which he has practised upon them, is not to be estimated by the alms which he has monopolized, by the food, or the raiment, or the money, which he has diverted to himself, from the more modest sufferers around him. He has done what is infinitely worse than turning aside the stream of charity. He has closed its floodgates. He has chilled and alienated the hearts of the wealthy, by the gall of bitterness which he has infused into this whole ministration. A few such harpies would suffice to exile a whole neighbourhood from the attentions of the benevolent, by the distrust and the jealousy wherewith they have poisoned their bosoms, and laid an arrest on all the sensibilities that else would have flowed from them. It is he who, ever on the watch and on the wing about some enterprise of imposture, makes it his business to work and to prey on the

compassionate principles of our nature; it is he who, in effect, grinds the faces of the poor, and that, with deadlier severity than even is done by the great baronial tyrant, the battlements of whose castle seem to frown, in all the pride of aristocracy, on the territory that is before it. There is, at all times, a kindliness of feeling ready to stream forth, with a tenfold greater liberality than ever, on the humble orders of life; and it is he, and such as he, who have congealed it. He has raised a jaundiced medium between the rich and the poor, in virtue of which, the former eye the latter with suspicion; and there is not a man who wears the garb, and prefers the applications of poverty, that has not suffered from the worthless impostor who has gone before him. They are, in fact, the deceit, and the indolence, and the low sordidness of a few, who have made outcasts of the many, and locked against them the feelings of the wealthy in a kind of iron imprisonment. The rich man who is ungenerous in his doings, keeps back one labourer from the field of charity. But a poor man who is ungenerous in his desires, can expel a thousand labourers in disgust away from it. He sheds a cruel and extended blight over the fair region of philanthropy; and many have abandoned it, who, but for him, would fondly have lingered thereupon; very many, who, but for the way in which their simplicity has been tried and trampled upon, would still have tasted the luxury of doing good unto the poor, and made it their delight, as well as their duty, to expend and expatiate among their habitations.

We say not this to exculpate the rich, for it is their part not to be weary in well-doing, but to prosecute the work and the labour of love under every discouragement. Neither do we say this to the disparagement of the poor; for the picture we have given is of the few out of the many; and the closer the acquaintance with humble life becomes, will it be the more seen of what a high pitch of generosity even the poorest are capable. They, in truth, though perhaps they are not aware of it, can contribute more to the cause of charity, by the moderation of their desires, than the rich can by the generosity of their doings. They, without, it may be, one penny to bestow, might obtain a place in the record of heaven, as the most liberal benefactors of their species. There is nothing in the humble condition of life they occupy, which precludes them from all that is great or graceful in human charity. There is a way in which they may equal, and even outpeer, the wealthiest of the land, in that very virtue of which wealth alone has been conceived to have the exclusive inheritance. There is a pervading character in humanity which the varieties of rank do not obliterate; and as, in virtue of the common corruption, the poor man may be as effectually the rapacious despoiler of his brethren, as the man of opulence above him—so, there is a common excellence attainable by both; and through which, the poor man may, to the full, be as splendid in generosity as the rich, and yield a far more important contribution to the peace and comfort of society,

To make this plain—it is in virtue of a generous doing on the part of a rich man, when a sum of money is offered for the relief of want; and it is in virtue of a generous desire on the part of a poor man, when this money is refused; when, with the feeling, that his necessities do not just warrant him to be yet a burden upon others, he declines to touch the offered liberality; when, with a delicate recoil from the unlooked-for proposal, he still resolves to put it for the present away, and to find, if possible, for himself a little longer; when, standing on the very margin of dependence, he would yet like to struggle with the difficulties of his situation, and to maintain this severe but honourable conflict, till hard necessity should force him to surrender. Let the money which he has thus so nobly shifted from himself take some new direction to another; and who, we ask, is the giver of it? The first and most obvious reply is, that it is he who owned it: but, it is still more emphatically true, that it is he who has declined it. It came originally out of the rich man's abundance; but it was the noble-hearted generosity of the poor man that handed it onwards to its final destination. He did not emanate the gift; but it is just as much that he has not absorbed it, but left it to find its full conveyance to some neighbour poorer than himself, to some family still more friendless and destitute than his own. It was given the first time out of an overflowing fulness. It is given the second time out of stinted and self-denying penury. In the world's eye, it is the proprietor who bestowed the charity. But, in

heaven's eye, the poor man who waived it away from himself to another is the more illustrious philanthropist of the two. The one gave it out of his affluence. The other gave it out of the sweat of his brow. He rose up early, and sat up late, that he might have it to bestow on a poorer than himself; and without once stretching forth a giver's hand to the necessities of his brethren, still is it possible, that by him, and such as him, may the main burden of this world's benevolence be borne.

It need scarcely be remarked, that, without supposing the offer of any sum made to a poor man who is generous in his desires, he, by simply keeping himself back from the distributions of charity, fulfils all the high functions which we have now ascribed to him. He leaves the charitable fund untouched for all that distress which is more clamorous than his own; and we, therefore, look, not to the original givers of the money, but to those who line, as it were, the margin of pauperism, and yet firmly refuse to enter it—we look upon them as the pre-eminent benefactors of society, who narrow, as it were, by a wall of defence, the ground of human dependence, and are, in fact, the guides and the guardians of all that opulence can bestow.

Thus it is, that when Christianity becomes universal, the doings of the one party, and the desires of the other, will meet and overpass. The poor will wish for no more than the rich will be delighted to bestow; and the rule of our text, which every real Christian at present finds so

practicable, will, when carried over the face of society, bind all the members of it into one consenting brotherhood. The duty of doing good to others will then coalesce with that counterpart duty which regulates our desires of good from them; and the work of benevolence will, at length, be prosecuted without that alloy of rapacity on the one hand, and distrust on the other, which serves so much to fester and disturb the whole of this ministration. To complete this adjustment, it is in every way as necessary to lay all the incumbent moralities on those who ask, as on those who confer; and never till the whole text, which comprehends the wishes of man as well as his actions, wield its entire authority over the species, will the disgusts and the prejudices, which form such a barrier between the ranks of human life, be effectually done away. It is not by the abolition of rank, but by assigning to each rank its duties, that peace, and friendship, and order, will at length be firmly established in our world. It is by the force of principle, and not by the force of some great political overthrow, that a consummation so delightful is to be attained. We have no conception whatever, that, even in millennial days, the diversities of wealth and station will at length be equalized. On looking forward to the time when kings shall be the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers of our church, we think that we can behold the perspective of as varied a distribution of place and property as before. In the pilgrimage of life, there will still be the moving procession of the few chariotted in

splendour on the highway, and the many pacing by their side along the line of the same journey. There will, perhaps, be a somewhat more elevated footpath for the crowd; and there will be an air of greater comfort and sufficiency amongst them; and the respectability of evident worth and goodness will sit upon the countenance of this general population. But, bating these, we look for no great change in the external aspect of society. It will only be a moral and a spiritual change. Kings will retain their sceptres, and nobles their coronets; but, as they float in magnificence along, will they look with benignant feeling on the humble wayfarers; and the honest salutations of regard and reverence will arise to them back again; and, should any weary passenger be ready to sink unfriended on his career, will he, at one time, be borne onwards by his fellows on the pathway, and, at another, will a shower of beneficence be made to descend from the crested equipage that overtakes him. It is Utopianism to think, that, in the ages of our world which are yet to come, the outward distinctions of life will not all be upholden. But it is not Utopianism, it is Prophecy to aver, that the breath of a new spirit will go abroad over the great family of mankind—so, that while, to the end of time, there shall be the high and the low in every passing generation, will the charity of kindred feelings, and of a common understanding, create a fellowship between them on their way, till they reach that heaven where human love shall be perfected, and all human greatness is unknown.

In various places of the New Testament, do we see the checks of spirit and delicacy laid upon all extravagant desires. Our text, while it enjoins the performance of good to others, up to the full measure of your desires of good from them, equally enjoins the keeping down of these desires to the measure of your performances. If Christian dispensers had only to do with Christian recipients, the whole work of benevolence would be with ease and harmony carried on. All that was unavoidable —all that came from the hand of Providence—all that was laid upon our suffering brethren by the unlooked-for visitations of accident or disease—all that pain or misfortune which necessarily attaches to the constitution of the species—all this the text most amply provides for; and all this a Christian society would be delighted to stretch forth their means for the purpose of alleviating or doing away.

We should not have dwelt so long upon this lesson, were it not for the essential Christian principle that is involved in it. The morality of the gospel is not more strenuous on the side of the duty of giving of this world's goods when it is needed, than it is against the desire of receiving when it is not needed. It is more blessed to give than to receive, and therefore less blessed to receive than to give. For the enforcement of this principle among the poorer brethren, did Paul give up a vast portion of his apostolical time and labour; and that he might be an ensample to the flock of working with his own hands, rather than be burdensome, did he set himself down to the occu-

pation of a tent-maker. That lesson is surely worthy of engrossing one sermon of an uninspired teacher, for the sake of which an inspired Apostle of the Gentiles engrossed as much time as would have admitted the preparation and the delivery of many sermons. But there is no more striking indication of the whole spirit and character of the gospel in this matter, than the example of him who is the author of it—and of whom we read these affecting words, that he came into the world not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It is a righteous thing in him who has of this world's goods, to minister to the necessities of others: but it is a still higher attainment of righteousness in him who has nothing but the daily earnings of his daily work to depend upon, so to manage and to strive that he shall not need to be ministered unto. Christianity overlooks no part of human conduct; and by providing for this in particular, does it, in fact, overtake, and that with a precept of utmost importance, the habit and condition of a very extended class of human society. And never does the gospel so exhibit its adaptation to our species —and never does virtue stand in such characters of strength and sacredness before us—as when impregnated with the evangelical spirit, and urged by evangelical motives, it takes its most direct sanction from the life and doings of the Saviour.

And he who feels as he ought, will bear with cheerfulness all that the Saviour prescribes, when he thinks how much it is for him that the Saviour has borne. We speak not of his poverty all the time that He lived upon earth. We speak not of

those years when, a houseless wanderer in an unthankful world, He had not where to lay his head. We speak not of the meek and uncomplaining sufferance with which He met the many ills that oppressed the tenor of His mortal existence. But we speak of that awful burden which crushed and overwhelmed its termination. We speak of that season of the hour and the power of darkness, when it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and to make His soul an offering for sin. To estimate aright the endurance of Him who himself bore our infirmities, would we ask of any individual to recollect some deep and awful period of abandonment in his own history—when that countenance which at one time beamed and brightened upon Him from above, was mantled in thickest darkness —when the iron of remorse entered into his soul—and, laid on a bed of torture, he was made to behold the evil of sin, and to taste of its bitterness. Let him look back, if he can, on this conflict of many agitations, and then figure the whole of this mental wretchedness to be borne off by the ministers of vengeance into hell, and stretched out unto eternity. And if, on the great day of expiation, a full atonement was rendered, and all that should have fallen upon us was placed upon the head ot the sacrifice—let him hence compute the weight and the awfulness of those sorrows which were carried by Him on whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, and who poured out His soul unto the death for us. If ever a sinner, under such a visitation, shall again emerge into peace and joy in believing—if he ever shall again find his way to

that fountain which is opened in the house of Judah —if he shall recover once more that sunshine of the soul, which, on the days that are past, disclosed to him the beauties of holiness here, and the glories of heaven hereafter—if ever he shall hear with effect, in this world, that voice from the mercy-seat, which still proclaims a welcome to the chief of sinners, and beckons him afresh to reconciliation—O! how gladly then should he bear, throughout the remainder of his days, the whole authority of the Lord who bought him; and bind for ever to his own person that yoke of the Saviour which is easy, and that burden which is light.

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE DISSIPATION OF LARGE CITIES.

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."—EPHES. v. 6.

THERE is one obvious respect in which the standard of morality amongst men, differs from that pure and universal standard which God hath set up for the obedience of His subjects. Men will not demand very urgently of each other, that, which does not very nearly, or very immediately, affect their own personal and particular interest. To the violations of justice, or truth, or humanity, they will be abundantly sensitive, because these offer a most visible and quickly felt encroachment on this interest. And thus it is, that the social virtues, even without any direct sanction from God at all, will ever draw a certain portion of respect and reverence around them; and that a loud testimony of abhorrence may often be heard from the mouths of ungodly men, against all such vices as may be classed under the general designation of vices of dishonesty.

Now, the same thing does not hold true of another class of vices, which may be termed the vices of dissipation. These do not touch, in so visible or direct a manner, on the security of what man possesses, and of what man has the greatest value for. But man is a selfish being, and there-

fore it is, that the ingredient of selfishness gives a keenness to his estimation of the evil and enormity of the former vices, which is scarcely felt at all in any estimation he may form of the latter vices. It is very true, at the same time, that if one were to compute the whole amount of the mischief they bring upon society, it would be found, that the profligacies of mere dissipation go very far to break up the peace, and enjoyment, and even the relative virtues of the world; and that, if these profligacies were reformed, it would work a mighty augmentation on the temporal good both of individuals and families. But the connexion between sobriety of character, and the happiness of the community, is not so apparent, because it is more remote than the connexion which obtains between integrity of character, and the happiness of the community; and man being not only a selfish but a short-sighted being, it follows, that while the voice of execration may be distinctly heard against every instance of fraud or of injustice, instances of licentiousness may occur on every side of us, and be reported on the one hand with the utmost levity, and be listened to, on the other, with the most entire and complacent toleration.

Here, then, is a point, in which the general morality of the world is at utter and irreconcileable variance with the law of God. Here is a case, in which the voice that cometh forth from the tribunal of public opinion pronounces one thing, and the voice that cometh forth from the sanctuary of God pronounces another. When there is an agreement between these two voices,

the principle on which obedience is rendered to their joint and concurring authority, may be altogether equivocal; and, with religious and irreligious men, you may observe an equal exhibition of all the equities, and all the civilities of life. But when there is a discrepancy between these two voices—or when the one attaches a criminality to certain habits of conduct, and is not at all seconded by the testimony of the other—then do we escape the confusion of mingled motives, and mingled authorities. The character of the two parties emerges out of the ambiguity which involved it. The law of God points, it must be allowed, as forcible an anathema against the man of dishonesty, as against the man of dissipation. But the chief burden of the world's anathema is laid on the head of the former; and therefore it is, that, on the latter ground, we meet with more discriminative tests of principle, and gather more satisfying materials for the question of—who is on the side of the Lord of hosts, and who is against Him?

The passage we have now submitted to you, looks hard on the votaries of dissipation. It is like eternal truth, lifting up its own proclamation, and causing it to be heard amid the errors and the delusions of a thoughtless world. It is like the Deity himself, looking forth, as He did, from a cloud, on the Egyptians of old, and troubling the souls of those who are lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God. It is like the voice of heaven, crying down the voice of human society, and sending forth a note of alarm amongst its giddy generations. It is like the unrolling of a portion of that

book of higher jurisprudence, out of which we shall be judged on the day of our coming account, and setting before our eyes an enactment, which, if we disregard it, will turn that day into the day of our coming condemnation. The words of man are adverted to in this solemn proclamation of God, against all unlawful and all unhallowed enjoyments, and they are called words of vanity. He sets aside the authority of human opinion altogether; and, on an irrevocable record, has He stamped such an assertion of the authority that belongeth to Himself only, as serves to the end of time for an enduring memorial of His will; and as commits the truth of the Lawgiver to the execution of a sentence of wrath against all whose souls are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. There is, in fact, a peculiar deceitfulness in the matter before us; and, in this verse, are we warned against it—"Let no man deceive you with vain words; for, because of these things, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."

In the preceding verse, there is such an enumeration as serves to explain what the things are which are alluded to in the text; and it is such an enumeration, you should remark, as goes to fasten the whole terror, and the whole threat, of the coming vengeance—not on the man who combines in his own person all the characters of iniquity which are specified, but on the man who realizes any one of these characters. It is not, you will observe, the conjunction *and*, but the conjunction *or*, which is interposed between them. It is not as if we said, that the man who is dishonest, and licentious, and

covetous, and unfeeling, shall not inherit the kingdom of God—but the man who is either dishonest, or licentious, or covetous, or unfeeling. On the single and exclusive possession of any one of these attributes, will God deal with you as with an enemy. The plea, that we are a little thoughtless, but we have a good heart, is conclusively cut asunder by this portion of the law and of the testimony. And in a corresponding passage, in the ninth verse of the sixth chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, the same peculiarity is observed in the enumeration of those who shall be excluded from God's favour, and have the burden of God's wrath laid on them through eternity. It is not the man who combines all the deformities of character which are there specified, but the man who realizes any one of the separate deformities. Some of them are the vices of dishonesty, others of them are the vices of dissipation; and, as if aware of a deceitfulness from this cause, he, after telling us that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, bids us not be deceived—for that neither the licentious, nor the abominable, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

He who keepeth the whole law, but offendeth in one point, says the Apostle James, is guilty of all. The truth is, that his disobedience on this one point may be more decisive of the state of his loyalty to God, than his keeping of all the rest. It may be the only point on which the character of his loyalty is really brought to the trial. All his conformities to the law of God might have been

rendered, because they thwarted not his own inclination; and, therefore, would have been rendered, though there had been no law at all. The single infraction may have taken place in the only case where there was a real competition between the will of the creature, and the will of the Creator; and the event proves to which of the two the right of superiority is awarded. Allegiance to God in truth is but one principle, and may be described by one short and summary expression; and one act of disobedience may involve in it such a total surrender of the principle, as goes to dethrone God altogether from the supremacy which belongs to Him. So that the account between a creature and the Creator is not like an account made up of many items, where the expunging of one item would only make one small and fractional deduction from the whole sum of obedience. If you reserve but a single item from this account, and another makes a principle of completing and rendering up the whole of it, then your character varies from his not by a slight shade of difference, but stands contrasted with it in direct and diametric opposition. We perceive, that, while with him the will of God has the mastery over all his inclinations, with you there is, at least, one inclination which has the mastery over the will of God; that, while in his bosom there exists a single and subordinating principle of allegiance to the law, in yours there exists another principle, which, on the coming round of a fit opportunity, developes itself in an act of transgression; that, while with him God may be said to walk and to dwell in him, with

you there is an evil visitant, who has taken up his abode in your heart, and lodges there either in a state of dormancy or of action, according to circumstances; that, while with him the purpose is honestly proceeded on, of doing nothing which God disapproves, with you there is a purpose not only different, but opposite, of doing something which he disapproves. On this single difference is suspended not a question of degree, but a question of kind. There are presented to us not two hues of the same colour, but two colours, just as broadly contrasted with each other as light and darkness. And such is the state of the alternative between a partial and an unreserved obedience, that while God imperatively claims the one as his due, He looks on the other as an expression of defiance against Him, and against His sovereignty.

It is the very same in civil government. A man renders himself an outcast by one act of disobedience. He does not need to accumulate upon himself the guilt of all the higher atrocities in crime, ere he forfeits his life to the injured laws of his country. By the perpetration of any one of them is the whole vengeance of the state brought to bear upon his person; and sentence of death is pronounced on a single murder, or forgery, or act of violent depredation.

And let us ask you just to reflect on the tone and spirit of that man towards his God, who would palliate, for example, the vices of dissipation to which he is addicted, by alleging his utter exemption from the vices of dishonesty, to which he is not addicted. Just think of the real disposition

and character of his soul, who can say, "I will please God, but only when, in so doing, I also please myself; or I will do homage to His law, but just in those instances by which I honour the rights, and fulfil the expectations, of society; or I will be decided by His opinion of the right and the wrong, but just when the opinion of my neighbourhood lends its powerful and effective confirmation. But in other cases, when the matter is reduced to a bare question between man and God, when He is the single party I have to do with, when His will and His wrath are the only elements which enter into the deliberation, when judgment, and eternity, and the voice of him who speaketh from heaven are the only considerations at issue—then do I feel myself at greater liberty, and I shall take my own way, and walk in the counsel of mine own heart, and after the sight of my own eyes." O! be assured, that when all this is laid bare on the day of reckoning, and the discerner of the heart pronounces upon it, and such a sentence is to be given, as will make it manifest to the consciences of all assembled, that true and righteous are the judgments of God—there is many a creditable man who has passed through the world with the plaudits and the testimonies of all his fellows, and without one other flaw upon his reputation but the very slender one of certain harmless foibles, and certain good-humoured peculiarities, who, when brought to the bar of account, will stand convicted there of having made a divinity of his own will, and spent his days in practical and habitual atheism.

And this argument is not at all affected by the

actual state of sinfulness and infirmity into which we have fallen. It is true, even of saints on earth, that they commit sin. But to be overtaken in a fault is one thing; to commit that fault with the deliberate consent of the mind is another. There is in the bosom of every true Christian a strenuous principle of resistance to sin, and it belongs to the very essence of the principle that it is resistance to *all* sin. It admits of no voluntary indulgence to one sin more than to another. Such an indulgence would not only change the character of what may be called the elementary principle of regeneration, but would destroy it altogether. The man who has entered on a course of Christian discipleship, carries on an unsparing and universal war with all iniquity. He has chosen Christ for his alone master, and he struggles against the ascendancy of every other. It is his sustained and habitual exertion in following after Him to forsake all; so that if his performance were as complete as his endeavour, you would not merely see a conformity to some of the precepts, but a conformity to the whole law of God. At all events, the endeavour is an honest one, and so far successful, that sin has not the dominion; and sure we are, that, in such a state of things, the vices of dissipation can have no existence. These vices can be more effectually shunned, and more effectually surmounted for example, than the infirmities of an unhappy temper. So that, if dissipation still attaches to the character, and appears in the conduct of any individual, we know not a more decisive evidence of the state of that individual as being

one of the many who crowd the broad way that leadeth to destruction. We look no further to make out our estimate of his present condition as being that of a rebel, and of his future prospect as being that of spending an eternity in hell. There is no halting between two opinions in this matter. The man who enters a career of dissipation throws down the gauntlet of defiance to his God. The man who persists in this career keeps on the ground of hostility against him.

Let us now endeavour to trace the origin, the progress, and the effects, of a life of dissipation.

First. Then it may be said of a very great number of young, on their entrance into the business of the world, that they have not been enough fortified against its seducing influences by their previous education at home. Generally speaking, they come out from the habitation of their parents unarmed and unprepared for the contest which awaits them. If the spirit of this world's morality reign in their own family, then it cannot be, that that their introduction into a more public scene of life will be very strictly guarded against those vices on which the world placidly smiles, or at least regards with silent toleration. They may have been told, in early boyhood, of the infamy of a lie. They may have had the virtues of punctuality, and of economy, and of regular attention to business, pressed upon their observation. They may have heard a uniform testimony on the side of good behaviour, up to the standard of such current moralities as obtain in their neighbourhood; and this, we are ready to admit, may include in it a

testimony against all such excesses of dissipation as would unfit them for the prosecution of this world's interests. But let us ask, whether there are not parents, who, after they have carried the work of discipline thus far, forbear to carry it any farther; who, while they would mourn over it as a family trial should any son of theirs fall a victim to excessive dissipation, yet are willing to tolerate the lesser degrees of it; who, instead of deciding the question on the alternative of his heaven or his hell, are satisfied with such a measure of sobriety as will save him from ruin and disgrace in this life; who, if they can only secure this, have no great objection to the moderate share he may take in this world's conformities; who feel, that in this matter there is a necessity and a power of example against which it is vain to struggle, and which must be acquiesced in; who deceive themselves with the fancied impossibility of stopping the evil in question —and say, that business must be gone through; and that, in the prosecution of it, exposures must be made; and that, for the success of it, a certain degree of accommodation to others must be observed; and seeing that it is so mighty an object for one to widen the extent of his connexions, he must neither be very retired nor very peculiar—nor must his hours of companionship be too jealously watched or inquired into—nor must we take him too strictly to task about engagements, and acquaintances, and expenditure—nor must we forget, that while sobriety has its time and its season in one period of life, indulgence has its season in another; and we may fetch from the

recollected follies of our own youth, a lesson of connivance for the present occasion; and altogether there is no help for it; and it appears to us, that absolutely and totally to secure him from ever entering upon scenes of dissipation, you must absolutely and totally withdraw him from the world, and surrender all his prospects of advancement, and give up the object of such a provision for our families as we feel to be a first and most important concern with us.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," says the Bible, "and all other things shall be added unto you." This is the promise which the faith of a Christian parent will rest upon; and in the face of every hazard to the worldly interests of his offspring, will he bring them up in the strict nurture and admonition of the Lord; and he will loudly protest against iniquity, in all its degrees, and in all its modifications; and while the power of discipline remains with him, will it ever be exerted on the side of pure, faultless, undeviating obedience; and he will tolerate no exception whatever; and he will brave all that looks formidable in singularity, and all that looks menacing in separation from the custom and countenance of the world; and feeling that his main concern is to secure for himself and for his family a place in the city which hath foundations, will he spurn all the maxims, and all the plausibilities, of a contagious neighbourhood away from him. He knows the price of his Christianity, and it is that he must break off conformity with the world—nor for any paltry advantage which it has to offer, will

he compromise the eternity of his children. And let us tell the parents of another spirit, and another principle, that they are as good as incurring the guilt of a human sacrifice; that they are offering up their children at the shrine of an idol; that they are parties in provoking the wrath of God against them here; and on the day when that wrath is to be revealed, shall they hear not only the moanings of their despair, but the outcries of their bitterest execration. On that day, the glance of reproach from their own neglected offspring will throw a deeper shade of wretchedness over the dark and boundless futurity that lies before them. And if, at the time when prophets rung the tidings of God's displeasure against the people of Israel, it was denounced as the foulest of all their abominations that they caused their children to pass through the fire unto Moloch—know ye parents, who, in placing your children on some road to gainful employment, have placed them without a sigh in the midst of depravity, so near and so surrounding, that, without a miracle, they must perish, you have done an act of idolatry to the God of this world; you have commanded your household, after you, to worship him as the great divinity of their lives; and you have caused your children to make their approaches unto his presence—and, in so doing, to pass through the fire of such temptations as have destroyed them.

We do not wish to offer you an overcharged picture on this melancholy subject. What we now say is not applicable to all. Even in the most corrupt and crowded of our cities, parents are to

be found, who nobly dare the surrender of every vain and flattering illusion, rather than surrender the Christianity of their children. And what is still more affecting, over the face of the country do we meet with such parents, who look on this world as a passage to another, and on all the members of their household as fellow-travellers to eternity along with them; and who, in this true spirit of believers, feel the salvation of their children to be, indeed, the burden of their best and their dearest interest; and who, by prayer, and precept, and example, have strenuously laboured with their souls, from the earliest light of their understanding; and have taught them to tremble at the way of evil-doers, and to have no fellowship with those who keep not the commandments of God—nor is there a day more sorrowful in the annals of this pious family, than when the course of time has brought them onwards to the departure of their eldest boy—and he must bid adieu to his native home, with all the peace, and all the simplicity, which abound in it—and as he eyes in fancy the distant town whither he is going, does he shrink as from the thought of an unknown wilderness—and it is his firm purpose to keep aloof from the dangers and the profligacies which deform it—and, should sinners offer to entice him, not to consent, and never, never, to forget the lessons of a father's vigilance, the tenderness of a mother's prayers.

Let us now, in the next place, pass from that state of things which obtains among the young at their outset into the world, and take a look of that state of things which obtains after they have got

fairly introduced into it—when the children of the ungodly, and the children of the religious, meet on one common arena—when business associates them together in one chamber, and the omnipotence of custom lays it upon them all to meet together at periodic intervals, and join in the same parties, and the same entertainments—when the yearly importation of youths from the country falls in with that assimilating mass of corruption which has got so firm and so rooted an establishment in the town—when the frail and unsheltered delicacies of the timid boy have to stand a rude and a boisterous contest with the hardier depravity of those who have gone before him—when ridicule, and example, and the vain words of a delusive sophistry, which palliates in his hearing the enormity of vice, are all brought to bear upon his scruples, and to stifle the remorse he might feel when he casts his principle and his purity away from him—when, placed as he is in a land of strangers, he finds, that the tenure of acquaintanceship, with nearly all around him, is, that he render himself up in a conformity to their doings—when a voice, like the voice of protecting friendship, bids him to the feast; and a welcome, like the welcome of honest kindness, hails his accession to the society; and a spirit, like the spirit of exhilarating joy, animates the whole scene of hospitality before him; and hours of rapture roll successively away on the wings of merriment and jocularity, and song; and after the homage of many libations has been rendered to honour, and fellowship, and patriotism, impurity is at length proclaimed in full and open cry, as one presiding

divinity, at the board of their social entertainment.

And now it remains to compute the general result of a process, which we assert of the vast majority of our young, on their way to manhood, that they have to undergo. The result is, that the vast majority are initiated into all the practices, and describe the full career of dissipation. Those who have imbibed from their fathers the spirit of this world's morality, are not sensibly arrested in this career, either by the opposition of their own friends, or by the voice of their own conscience. Those who have imbibed an opposite spirit, and have brought it into competition with an evil world, and have at length yielded, have done so, we may well suppose, with many a sigh, and many a struggle, and many a look of remembrance on those former years when they were taught to lisp the prayer of infancy, and were trained in a mansion of piety to a reverence for God, and for all his ways; and, even still, will a parent's parting advice haunt his memory, and a letter from the good old man revive the sensibilities which at one time guarded and adorned him; and, at times, will the transient gleam of remorse lighten up its agony within him; and when he contrasts the profaneness and depravity of his present companions, with the sacredness of all he ever heard or saw in his father's dwelling, it will almost feel as if conscience were again to resume her power, and the revisiting spirit of God to call him back again from the paths of wickedness; and on his restless bed will the images of guilt conspire to disturb him, and the terrors of

punishment offer to scare him away; and many will be the dreary and dissatisfied intervals when he shall be forced to acknowledge, that, in bartering his soul for the pleasures of sin, he has bartered the peace and enjoyment of the world along with it. But, alas! the entanglements of companionship have got hold of him; and the inveteracy of habit tyrannizes over all his purposes; and the stated opportunity again comes round; and the loud laugh of his partners in guilt chases, for another season, all his despondency away from him; and the infatuation gathers upon him every month; and a hardening process goes on within his heart; and the deceitfulness of sin grows apace; and he at length becomes one of the sturdiest and most unrelenting of her votaries; and he, in his turn, strengthens the conspiracy that is formed against the morals of a new generation; and all the ingenuous delicacies of other days are obliterated; and he contracts a temperament of knowing, hackneyed, unfeeling depravity: and thus the mischief is transmitted from one year to another, and keeps up the guilty history of every place of crowded population.

And let us here speak one word to those seniors in depravity—those men who give to the corruption of acquaintances, who are younger than themselves, their countenance and their agency; who can initiate them without a sigh in the mysteries of guilt, and care not though a parent's hope should wither and expire under the contagion of their ruffian example. It is only upon their own conversion that we can speak to them the pardon of the gospel. It is only if they themselves are

washed, and sanctified, and justified, that we can warrant their personal deliverance from the wrath that is to come. But under all the concealment which rests on the futurities of God's administration, we know, that there are degrees of suffering in hell—and that, while some are beaten with few stripes, others are beaten with many. And surely, if they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever, we may be well assured, that they who patronize the cause of iniquity—they who can beckon others to that way which leadeth on to the chambers of death—they who can aid and witness, without a sigh, the extinction of youthful modesty—surely, it may well be said of such, that on them a darker frown will fall from the judgment-seat, and through eternity will they have to bear the pains of a fiercer indignation.

Having thus looked to the commencement of a course of dissipation, and to its progress, let us now, in the third place, look to its usual termination. We speak not at present of the coming death, and of the coming judgment, but of the change which takes place on many a votary of licentiousness, when he becomes what the world calls a reformed man; and puts on the decencies of a sober and domestic establishment; and bids adieu to the pursuits and the profligacies of youth, not because he has repented of them, but because he has outlived them. You all perceive how this may be done without one movement of the heart, or of the understanding, towards God—that it is done by many, though duty to him be not in all their

thoughts—that the change, in this case, is not from the idol of pleasure unto God, but only from one idol to another—and that, after the whole of this boasted transformation, we may still behold the same body of sin and of death, and only a new complexion thrown over it. There may be the putting on of sobriety, but there is no putting on of godliness. It is a common and an easy transition to pass from one kind of disobedience to another, but it is not so easy to give up that rebelliousness of the heart which lies at the root of all disobedience. It may be easy, after the wonted course of dissipation is ended, to hold out another aspect altogether in the eye of acquaintances; but it is not so easy to recover that shock, and that overthrow, which the religious principle sustains, when a man first enters the world, and surrenders himself to the power of its enticements. Such were some of you, says the Apostle, but ye are washed, and sanctified, and justified. Our reformed man knows not the meaning of such a process; and, most assuredly, has not at all realized it in the history of his own person. We will not say what new object he is running after. It may be wealth, or ambition, or philosophy; but it is nothing connected with the interest of his soul. It bears no reference whatever to the concerns of that great relationship which obtains between the creature and the Creator. The man has withdrawn, and perhaps for ever, from the scenes of dissipation, and has betaken himself to another way—but still it is his own way. It is not the will or the way of God that he is yet caring for. Such a man may

bid adieu to profligacy in his own person. But he lifts up the light of his countenance on the profligacy of others. He gives it the whole weight and authority of his connivance. He wields, we will say it, such an instrumentality of seduction over the young, as, though not so alarming, is far more dangerous than the undisguised attempts of those who are the immediate agents of corruption. The formal and deliberate conspiracy of those who club together, at stated terms of companionship, may be all seen, and watched, and guarded against. But how shall we pursue this conspiracy into its other ramifications? How shall we be able to neutralise that insinuating poison which distils from the lips of grave and respectable citizens? How shall we be able to dissipate that gloss which is thrown by the smile of elders and superiors over the sins of forbidden indulgence? How can we disarm the bewitching sophistry which lies in all these evident tokens of complacency, on the part of advanced and reputable men? How is it possible to tract the progress of this sore evil, throughout all the business and intercourse of society? How can we stem the influence of evil communications, when the friend, and the patron, and the man who has cheered and signalized us by his polite invitations, turns his own family-table into a nursery of licentiousness? How can we but despair of ever witnessing on earth a pure and a holy generation, when even parents will utter their polluting levities in the hearing of their own children; and vice, and humour, and gaiety, are all indiscriminately blended into one conversation;

and a loud laugh, from the initiated and the uninitiated in profligacy, is ever ready to flatter and to regale the man who can thus prostitute his powers of entertainment? O! for an arm of strength to demolish this firm and far spread compact of iniquity; and for the power of some such piercing and prophetic voice, as might convince our reformed men of the baleful influence they cast behind them on the morals of the succeeding generation.

We, at the same time, have our eye perfectly open to that great external improvement which has taken place, of late years, in the manners of society. There is not the same grossness of conversation. There is not the same impatience for the withdrawment of him, who, asked to grace the outset of an assembled party, is compelled, at a certain step in the process of conviviality, by the obligations of professional decency, to retire from it. There is not so frequent an exaction of this as one of the established proprieties of social or of fashionable life. And if such an exaction was ever laid by the omnipotence of custom on a minister of Christianity, it is such an exaction as ought never, never, to be complied with. It is not for him to lend the sanction of his presence to a meeting with which he could not sit to its final termination. It is not for him to stand associated, for a single hour, with an assemblage of men who begin with hypocrisy, and end with downright blackguardism. It is not for him to watch the progress of the coming ribaldry, and to hit the well selected moment when talk, and turbulence, and boisterous merriment, are on the

eve of bursting forth upon the company, and carrying them forward to the full acmé and uproar of their enjoyment. It is quite in vain to say, that he has only sanctified one part of such an entertainment. He has as good as given his connivance to the whole of it, and left behind him a discharge in full of all its abominations; and, therefore, be they who they may, whether they rank among the proudest aristocracy of our land, or are chariotted in splendour along, as the wealthiest of the citizens, it is his part to keep as purely and indignantly aloof from such society as this, as he would from the vilest and most debasing associations of profligacy.

And now the important question comes to be put: what is the likeliest way of setting up a barrier against this desolating torrent of corruption, into which there enter so many elements of power and strength, that, to the general eye, it looks altogether irresistible? It is easier to give a negative, than an affirmative answer to this question. And, therefore, it shall be our first remark, that the mischief never will be effectually combated by any expedient separate from the growth and the transmission of personal Christianity throughout the land. If no addition be made to the stock of religious principle in a country, then the profligacy of a country will make its obstinate stand against all the mechanism of the most skilful, and plausible, and well looking contrivances. It must not be disguised from you, that it does not lie within the compass either of prisons or penitentiaries to work any sensible abatement on the wickedness of our exist-

ing generation. The operation must be of a preventive, rather than of a corrective tendency. It must be brought to bear upon boyhood; and be kept up through that whole period of random exposures through which it has to run, on its way to an established condition in society; and a high tone of moral purity must be infused into the bosom of many individuals; and their agency will effect, through the channels of family and social connexion, what never can be effected by any framework of artificial regulations, so long as the spirit and character of society remain what they are. In other words, the progress of reformation will never be sensibly carried forward beyond the progress of personal Christianity in the world; and, therefore, the question resolves itself into the likeliest method of adding to the number of Christian parents who may fortify the principles of their children at their first outset in life—of adding to the number of Christian young men, who might nobly dare to be singular, and to perform the angelic office of guardians and advisers to those who are younger than themselves—of adding to the number of Christians in middle and advanced life, who might, as far as in them lies, alter the general feeling and countenance of society; and blunt the force of that tacit but most seductive testimony, which has done so much to throw a palliative veil over the guilt of a life of dissipation.

Such a question cannot be entered upon, at present, in all its bearings, and in all its generality. And we must, therefore, simply satisfy ourselves with the object, that as we have attempted already

to reproach the indifference of parents, and to reproach the unfeeling depravity of those young men who scatter their pestilential levities around the whole circle of their companionship, we may now shortly attempt to lay upon the men of middle and advanced life, in general society, their share of responsibility for the morals of the rising generation. For the promotion of this great cause, it is not at all necessary to school them into any nice or exquisite contrivances. Could we only give them a desire towards it, and a sense of obligation, they would soon find their own way to the right exercise of their own influence in forwarding the interests of purity and virtue among the young. Could we only affect their consciences on this point, there would be almost no necessity whatever to guide or enlighten their understanding. Could we only get them to be Christians, and to carry their Christianity into their business, they would then feel themselves invested with a guardianship; and that time, and pains, and attention, ought to be given to the fulfilment of its concerns. It is quite in vain to ask, as if there was any mystery, or any helplessness about it, "What can they do?" For, is it not a fact most palpably obvious, that much can be done even by the mere power of example? Or might not the master of any trading establishment send the pervading influence of his own principles among some, at least, of the servants and auxiliaries who belong to it? Or can he, in no degree whatever, so select those who are admitted, as to ward off much contamination from the branches of his employ? Or might not he so

deal out his encouragement to the deserving, as to confirm them in all their purposes of sobriety? Or might not he interpose the shield of his countenance and his testimony between a struggling youth and the ridicule of his acquaintances? Or, by the friendly conversation of half an hour, might not he strengthen within him every principle of virtuous resistance? By these, and by a thousand other expedients, which will readily suggest themselves to him who has the good will, might not a healing water be sent forth through the most corrupted of all our establishments; and it be made safe for the unguarded young to officiate in its chambers; and it be made possible to enter upon the business of the world without entering on such a scene of temptation, as to render almost inevitable the vice of the world, and its impiety, and its final and everlasting condemnation? Would Christians only be open and intrepid, and carry their religion into their merchandise; and furnish us with a single hundred of such houses in this city, where the care and character of the master formed a guarantee for the sobriety of all his dependents, it would be like the clearing out of a piece of cultivated ground in the midst of a frightful wilderness; and parents would know whither they could repair with confidence for the settlement of their offspring; and we should behold, what is mightily to be desired, a line of broad and visible demarcation between the church and the world; and an interest so precious as the immortality of children, would no longer be left to the play of such fortuitous elements, as operated at random throughout the confused

mass of a mingled and indiscriminate society. And thus, the pieties of a father's house might bear to be transplanted even into the scenes of ordinary business; and instead of withering, as they do at present, under a contagion which spreads in every direction, and fills up the whole face of the community, they might flourish in that moral region which was occupied by a peculiar people, and which they had reclaimed from a world that lieth in wickedness.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE VITIATING INFLUENCE OF THE HIGHER UPON THE LOWER ORDERS OF SOCIETY.

"Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but wo unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."—LUKE xvii. 1, 2.

To offend another, according to the common acceptation of the words, is to displease him. Now, this is not its acceptation in the verse before us, nor in several other verses of the New Testament. It were coming nearer to the scriptural meaning of the term, had we, instead of offence and offending, adopted the terms, scandal and scandalizing. But the full signification of the phrase, to offend another, is to cause him to fall from the faith and obedience of the gospel. It may be such a falling away as that a man recovers himself—like the disciples, who were all offended in Christ, and forsook him; and, after a season of separation, were at length re-established in their discipleship. Or it may be such a falling away as that there is no recovery—like those in the gospel of John, who, offended by the sayings of our Saviour, went back, and walked no more with him. If you put such a stumbling-block in the way of a neighbour, who is walking on a course of Christian

discipleship, as to make him fall, you offend him. It is in this sense that our Saviour uses the word, when he speaks of your own right hand, or your own right eye, offending you. They may do so, by giving you an occasion to fall. And what is here translated offend, is, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, translated, to make to offend; where Paul says, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

The little ones to whom our Saviour allŭdes, in this passage, he elsewhere more fully particularizes, by telling us, that they are those who believe in him. There is no call here for entering into any controversy about the doctrine of perseverance. It is not necessary, either for the purpose of explaining, or of giving force to the practical lesson of the text now submitted to you. We happen to be as much satisfied with the doctrine, that he who hath a real faith in the gospel of Christ will never fall away, as we are satisfied with the truth of any identical proposition. If a professing disciple do, in fact, fall away, this is a phenomenon which might be traced to an essential defect of principle at the first; which proves, in fact, that he made the mistake of one principle for another; and that, while he thought he had the faith, it was not that very faith of the New Testament which is unto salvation. There might have been the semblance of a work of grace, without its reality. Such a work, if genuinely begun, will be carried onwards even unto perfection. But this is a point on which it is not at all necessary, at present, for

us to dogmatize. We are led, by the text, to expatiate on the guilt of that one man who has wrecked the interest of another man's eternity. Now, it may be very true, that if the second has actually entered within the strait gate, it is not in the power of the first, with all his artifices, and all his temptations, to draw him out again. But instead of having entered the gate, he may only be on the road that leads to it; and it is enough, amid the uncertainties which, in this life, hang over the question of—who are really believers, and who are not? that it is not known in which of these two conditions the little one is; and that, therefore, to seduce him from obedience to the will of Christ, may, in fact, be to arrest his progress towards Christ, and to draw him back unto the perdition of his soul. The whole guilt of the text may be realized by him who keeps back another from the church, where he might have heard, and heard with acceptance, the word of life which he has not yet accepted; or by him, whose influence or whose example detains, in the entanglement of any one sin, the acquaintance who is meditating an outset on the path of decided Christianity—seeing, that every such outset will land in disappointment those who, in the act of following after Christ, do not forsake all; or by him who tampers with the conscience of an apparently zealous and confirmed disciple, so as to seduce him into some habitual sin, either of neglect or of performance—seeing, that the individual who, but for this seduction, might have cleaved fully unto the Lord, and turned out a prosperous and decided Christian,

has been led to put a good conscience away from him—and so, by making shipwreck of his faith, has proved to the world, that it was not the faith which could obtain the victory. It is true, that it is not possible to seduce the elect. But even this suggestion, perverse and unjust as it would be in its application, is not generally present to the mind of him who is guilty of the attempt to seduce, or of the act which carries a seducing influence along with it. The guilt with which he is chargeable, is that of an indifference to the spiritual and everlasting fate of others. He is wilfully the occasion of causing those who are the little ones, or, for any thing he knows, might have been the little ones of Christ, to fall; and it is against him that our Saviour, in the text, lifts not a cool but an impassioned testimony. It is of him that He utters one of the most severe and solemn denunciations of the gospel.

If this text were thoroughly pursued into its manifold applications, it would be found to lay a weight of fearful responsibility upon us all. We are here called upon, not to work out our own salvation, but to compute the reflex influence of all our works, and of all our ways, on the principles of others. And when one thinks of the mischief which this influence might spread around it, even from Christians of chiefest reputation; when one thinks of the readiness of man to take shelter in the example of an acknowledged superior; when one thinks that some inconsistency of ours might seduce another into such an imitation as overbears the reproaches of his own conscience, and as, by

vitiating the singleness of his eye, makes the whole of his body, instead of being full of light to be full of darkness; when one takes the lesson along with him into the various conditions of life he may be called by Providence to occupy, and thinks, that if, either as a parent surrounded by his family, or as a master by the members of his establishment, or as a citizen by the many observers of his neighbourhood around him, he shall either speak such words, or do such actions, or administer his affairs in such a way as is unworthy of his high and immortal destination, that then a taint of corruption is sure to descend from such an exhibition, upon the immortals who are on every side of him; when one thinks of himself as the source and the centre of a contagion which might bring a blight upon the graces and the prospects of other souls besides his own—surely this is enough to supply him with a reason why, in working out his own personal salvation, he should do it with fear, and with watchfulness, and with much trembling.

But we are now upon the ground of a higher and more delicate conscientiousness, than is generally to be met with. Whereas, our object, at present, is to expose certain of the grosser offences which abound in society, and which spread a most dangerous and ensnaring influence among the individuals who compose it. To this we have been insensibly led, by the topics of that discourse which we addressed to you on a former occasion; and when it fell in our way to animadvert on the magnitude of that man's guilt, who, either by his example, or his connivance, or his direct and formal tuition,

can speed the entrance of the yet unpractised young on a career of dissipation. And whether he be a parent, who, trenched in this world's maxims, can, without a struggle, and without a sigh, leave his helpless offspring to take their random and unprotected way through this world's conformities; or whether he be one of those seniors in depravity, who can cheer on his more youthful companion to a surrender of all those scruples, and all those delicacies, which have hitherto adorned him; or whether he be a more aged citizen, who, having run the wonted course of intemperance, can cast an approving eye on the corruption throughout all its stages, and give a tenfold force to all its allurements by setting up the authority of grave and reformed manhood upon its side; in each of these characters do we see an offence that is pregnant with deadliest mischief to the principles of the rising generation: and while we are told by our text, that, for such offences, there exists some deep and mysterious necessity—insomuch, that it is impossible but that offences must come—yet, let us not forget to urge on every one sharer in this work of moral contamination, that never does the meek and gentle Saviour speak in terms more threatening, or more reproachful, than when he speaks of the enormity of such misconduct. There cannot, in truth be a grosser outrage committed on the order of God's administration, than that which he is in the habit of inflicting. There cannot, surely, be a directer act of rebellion, than that which multiplies the adherents of its own cause, and which swells the hosts of the rebellious. There cannot be made to

rest a feller condemnation on the head of iniquity, than that which is sealed by the blood of its own victims, and its own proselytes. Nor should we wonder when that is said of such an agent for iniquity which is said of the betrayer of our Lord. It were better for him, that he had not been born. It were better for him, now that he is born, could he be committed back again to deep annihilation. Rather than that he should offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

This is one case of such offences as are adverted to in the text. Another and still more specific is beginning, we understand, to be exemplified in our own city, though it has not attained to the height or to the frequency at which it occurs in a neighbouring metropolis. We allude to the doing of week-day business upon the sabbath. We allude to that violence which is rudely offered to the feelings and the associations of sacredness, by those exactions that an ungodly master lays at times on his youthful dependents—when those hours which they wont to spend in church, they are called upon to spend in the counting-house—when that day, which ought to be a day of piety, is turned into a day of posting and of penmanship—when the rules of the decalogue are set aside, and utterly superseded by the rules of the great trading establishment; and every thing is made to give way to the hurrying emergency of orders, and clearances, and the demands of instant correspondence. Such is the magnitude of this stumbling-block, that many is the young man who has here fallen to rise no more

—that, at this point of departure, he has so widened his distance from God, as never, in fact, to return to Him—that, in this distressing contest between principle and necessity, the final blow has been given to his religious principles—that the master whom he serves, and under whom he earns his provision for time, has here wrested the whole interest of his eternity away from him—that, from this moment, there gathers upon his soul the complexion of a hardier and more determined impiety—and conscience once stifled now speaks to him with a feebler voice—and the world obtains a firmer lodgement in his heart—and, renouncing all his original tenderness about Sabbath, and Sabbath employments, he can now, with the thorough unconcern of a fixed and familiarized proselyte, keep equal pace by his fellows throughout every scene of profanation—and he who wont to tremble and recoil from the freedoms of irreligion with the sensibility of a little one, may soon become the most daringly rebellious of them all—and that Sabbath which he has now learned, at one time, to give to business, he, at another, gives to unhallowed enjoyments—and it is turned into a day of visits and excursions, given up to pleasure, and enlivened by all the mirth and extravagance of holiday—and, when sacrament is proclaimed from the city pulpits, he, the apt, the well trained disciple of his corrupt and corrupting superior, is the readiest to plan the amusements of the coming opportunity, and among the very foremost in the ranks of emigration—and though he may look back, at times, to the Sabbath of his father's pious house,

yet the retrospect is always becoming dimmer, and at length it ceases to disturb him—and thus the alienation widens every year, till, wholly given over to impiety, he lives without God in the world.

And were we asked to state the dimensions of that iniquity which stalks regardlessly, and at large, over the ruin of youthful principles—were we asked to find a place in the catalogue of guilt for a crime the atrocity of which is only equalled, we understand by its frequency—were we called to characterise the man who, so far from attempting one counteracting influence against the profligacy of his dependents, issues, from the chair of authority on which he sits, a commandment, in the direct face of a commandment from God—the man who has chartered impiety in the articles of agreement, and has vested himself with a property in that time which only belongs to the Lord of the Sabbath—were we asked to look to the man who could thus overbear the last remnants of remorse in a struggling and unpractised bosom, and glitter in all the ensigns of a prosperity that is reared on the violated consciences of those who are beneath him—O! were the question put, to whom shall we liken such a man? or, what is the likeness to which we can compare him? we would say, that the guilt of him who trafficked on the highway, or trafficked on that outraged coast, from whose weeping families children were irrecoverably torn, was far outmeasured by the guilt which could thus frustrate a father's fondest prayers, and trample under foot the hopes and the preparations of eternity.

There is another way whereby, in the employ

of a careless and unprincipled master, it is impossible but that offences must come. You know just as well as we do, that there are chicaneries in business; and, so long as we forbear stating the precise extent of them, there is not an individual among you, who has a title to construe the assertion into an affronting charge of criminality against himself. But you surely know, as well as we, that the mercantile profession, conducted, as it often is, with the purest integrity, and laying no resistless necessity whatever for the surrender of principle on any of its members; and dignified by some of the noblest exhibitions of untainted honour, and devoted friendship, and magnificent generosity, that have ever been recorded of our nature;—you know as well as we, that it was utterly extravagant, and in the face of all observation, to affirm, that each, and every one of its numerous competitors, stood clearly and totally exempted from the sins of an undue selfishness. And, accordingly, there are certain commodious falsehoods occasionally practised in this department of human affairs. There are, for example, certain dexterous and gainful evasions, whereby the payers of tribute are enabled, at times, to make their escape from the eagle eye of the exactors of tribute. There are even certain contests of ingenuity between individual traders, where, in the higgling of a very keen and anxious negotiation, each of them is tempted, in talking of offers and prices, and the reports of fluctuations in home and foreign markets, to say the things which are not. You must assuredly know, that these, and such as these, have introduced a certain quantity

of what may be called shuffling, into the communications of the trading world—insomuch, that the simplicity of yea yea, and nay nay, is in some degree exploded; and there is a kind of understood toleration established for certain modes of expression, which could not, we are much afraid, stand the rigid scrutiny of the great day; and there is an abatement of confidence between man and man, implying, we doubt, such a proportionate abatement of truth, as goes to extend most fearfully the condemnation that is due to all liars, who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. And who can compute the effect of all this on the young and yet unpractised observer? Who does not see, that it must go to reduce the tone of his principles; and to involve him in many a delicate struggle between the morality he has learned from his catechism, and the morality he sees in the counting-house; and to obliterate, in his mind, the distinctions between right and wrong; and, at length, to reconcile his conscience to a sin which, like every other, deserves the wrath and the curse of God; and to make him tamper with a direct commandment, in such a way, as that falsehoods and frauds might be nothing more in his estimation, than the peccadilloes of an innocent compliance with the current practices and moralities of the world? Here, then, is a point, at which the way of those who conform to this world, diverges from the way of those peculiar people who are redeemed from all iniquity, and are thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Here is a grievous occasion to fall. Here is a competi-

tion between the service of God and the service of Mammon. Here is the exhibition of another offence, and the bringing forward of another temptation, to those who are entering on the business of the world, little adverted to, we fear, by those who live in utter carelessness of their own souls, and never spend a thought or a sigh about the immortality of others—but most distinctly singled out by the text as a crime of foremost magnitude in the eye of Him who judgeth righteously.

And before we quit the subject of such offences as take place in ordinary trade, let us just advert to one example of it—not so much for the frequency of its occurrence, as for the way that it stands connected in principle with a very general, and, we believe, a very mischievous offence, that takes place in domestic society. It is neither, you will observe, the avarice nor the selfishness of our nature, which forms the only obstruction in the way of one man dealing plainly with another. There is another obstruction, founded on a far more pleasing and amiable principle—even on that delicacy of feeling, in virtue of which, one man cannot bear to wound or to mortify another. It would require, for instance, a very rare, and, certainly, not a very enviable degree of hardihood, to tell another, without pain, that you did not think him worthy of being trusted. And yet, in the doings of merchandise, this is the very trial of delicacy which sometimes offers itself. The man with whom you stand committed to as great an extent as you count to be advisable, would like, perhaps, to try your confidence in him, and his own credit

with you, a little farther; and he comes back upon you with a fresh order; and you secretly have no desire to link any more of your property with his speculation; and the difficulty is how to get the application in question disposed of; and you feel that by far the pleasantest way, to all the parties concerned, would be, to make him believe that you refuse the application not because you will not comply, but because you cannot—for that you have no more of the article he wants from you upon hand. And it would only be putting your own soul to hazard, did you personally and by yourself make this communication: but you select, perhaps, as the organ of it some agent or underling of your establishment, who knows it to be false; and to avoid the soreness of a personal encounter with the man whom you are to disappoint, you devolve the whole business of this lying apology upon others; and thus do you continue to shift this oppressive burden away from you—or, in other words, to save your own delicacy, you count not, and you care not, about another's damnation.

Now, what we call upon you to mark, is the perfect identity of principle between this case of making a brother to offend, and another case which obtains, we have heard, to a very great extent among the most genteel and opulent of our city families. In this case, you put a lie into the mouth of a dependent, and that, for the purpose of protecting your substance from such an application as might expose it to hazard or diminution. In the second case, you put a lie into the mouth of a dependent, and that, for the purpose of protecting

your time from such an encroachment as you would not feel to be convenient or agreeable. And, in both cases, you are led to hold out this offence by a certain delicacy of temperament, in virtue of which, you can neither give a man plainly to understand that you are not willing to trust him, nor can you give him to understand that you count his company to be an interruption. But, in both the one and the other example, look to the little account that is made of a brother's or of a sister's eternity; behold the guilty task that is thus unmercifully laid upon one who is shortly to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; think of the entanglement which is thus made to beset the path of a creature who is unperishable. That, at the shrine of Mammon, such a bloody sacrifice should be rendered by some of his unrelenting votaries, is not to be wondered at; but that the shrine of elegance and fashion should be bathed in blood—that soft and sentimental ladyship should put forth her hand to such an enormity—that she who can sigh so gently, and shed her graceful tear over the sufferings of others, should thus be accessary to the second and more awful death of her own domestics—that one who looks the mildest and the loveliest of human beings, should exact obedience to a mandate which carries wrath, and tribulation, and anguish, in its train—O! how it should confirm every Christian in his defiance to the authority of fashion, and lead him to spurn at all its folly, and at all its worthlessness.

And it is quite in vain to say, that the servant whom you thus employ as the deputy of your

falsehood, can possibly execute the commission without the conscience being at all tainted or defiled by it; that a simple cottage maid can so sophisticate the matter, as, without any violence to her original principles, to utter the language of what she assuredly knows to be a downright lie; that she, humble and untutored soul, can sustain no injury when thus made to tamper with the plain English of these realms; that she can at all satisfy herself, how, by the prescribed utterance of "not at home," she is not pronouncing such words as are substantially untrue, but merely using them in another and perfectly understood meaning—and which, according to their modern translation, denote, that the person of whom she is thus speaking, instead of being away from home, is secretly lurking in one of the most secure and intimate of its receptacles. You may try to darken and transform this piece of casuistry as you will; and work up your own minds into the peaceable conviction that it is all right, and as it should be. But be very certain, that where the moral sense of your domestic is not already overthrown, there is, at least, one bosom within which you have raised a war of doubts and of difficulties; and where, if the victory be on your side, it will be on the side of him who is the great enemy of righteousness. There is, at least, one person along the line of this conveyance of deceit, who condemneth herself in that which she alloweth; who, in the language of Paul, esteeming the practice to be unclean, to her will it be unclean; who will perform her task with the offence of her own conscience, and to whom, therefore, it will

indeed be evil; who cannot render obedience in this matter to her earthly superior, but by an act, in which she does not stand clear and unconscious of guilt before God; and with whom, therefore, the sad consequence of what we can call nothing else than a barbarous combination against the principles and the prospects of the lower orders, is—that as she has not cleaved fully unto the Lord, and has not kept by the service of the one master, and has not forsaken all at His bidding, she cannot be the disciple of Christ.

The aphorism, that he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all, tells us something more than of the way in which God adjudges condemnation to the disobedient. It also tells us of the way in which one individual act of sinfulness operates upon our moral nature. It is altogether an erroneous view of the commandments, to look upon them as so many observances to which we are bound by as many distinct and independent ties of obligation—insomuch, that the transgression of one of them may be brought about by the dissolution of one separate tie, and may leave all the others with as entire a constraining influence and authority as before. The truth is, that the commandments ought rather to be looked upon as branching out from one great and general tie of obligation; and that there is no such thing as loosening the hold of one of them upon the conscience, but by the unfastening of that tie which binds them all upon the conscience. So that if one member in the system of practical righteousness be made to suffer, all the other members suffer along with it; and if

one decision of the moral sense be thwarted, the organ of the moral sense is permanently impaired, and a leaven of iniquity infused into all its other decisions; and if one suggestion of this inward monitor be stifled, a general shock is given to his authority over the whole man; and if one of the least commandments of the law is left unfulfilled, the law itself is brought down from its rightful ascendancy; and thus it is, that one act of disobedience may be the commencement and the token of a systematic universal rebelliousness of the heart against God. It is this which gives such a wide-wasting malignity to each of the separate offences on which we have now expatiated. It is this which so multiplies the means and the possibilities of corruption in the world. It is thus that, at every one point in the intercourse of human society, there may be struck out a fountain of poisonous emanation on all who approach it; and think not, therefore, that under each of the examples we have given, we were only contending for the preservation of one single feature in the character of him who stands exposed to this world's offences. We felt it, in fact, to be a contest for his eternity; and that the case involved in it his general condition with God; and that he who leads the young into a course of dissipation—or that he who tampers with their impressions of Sabbath sacredness—or that he who, either in the walks of business, or in the services of the family, makes them the agents of deceitfulness—or that he, in short, who tempts them to transgress in any one thing, has, in fact, poured such a pervading taint into their moral

constitution, as to spoil or corrupt them in all things: and that thus, upon one solitary occasion, or by the exhibition of one particular offence, a mischief may be done equivalent to the total destruction of a human soul, or to the blotting out of its prospects for immortality.

And let us just ask a master or a mistress, who can thus make free with the moral principle of their servants in one instance, how they can look for pure or correct principle from them in other instances? What right have they to complain of unfaithfulness against themselves, who have deliberately seduced another into a habit of unfaithfulness against God? Are they so utterly unskilled in the mysteries of our nature, as not to perceive, that if a man gather hardihood enough to break the Sabbath in opposition to his own conscience, this very hardihood will avail him to the breaking of other obligations?—that he whom, for their advantage, they have so exercised, as to fill his conscience with offence towards his God, will not scruple, for his own advantage, so to exercise himself, as to fill his conscience with offence towards his master?—that the servant whom you have taught to lie, has gotten such rudiments of education at your hand, as that, without any further help, he can now teach himself to purloin?—and yet nothing more frequent than loud and angry complainings against the treachery of servants; as if, in the general wreck of their other principles, a principle of consideration for the good and interest of their employer—and who, at the same time, has been their seducer—was to survive in all its power,

and all its sensibility. It is just such a retribution as was to be looked for. It is a recoil upon their own heads of the mischief which they themselves have originated. It is the temporal part of the punishment which they have to bear for the sin of our text, but not the whole of it; for better for them that both person and property were cast into the sea, than that they should stand the reckoning of that day, when called to give an account of the souls that they have murdered, and the blood of so mighty a destruction is required at their hands.

The evil against which we have just protested, is an outrage of far greater enormity than tyrant or oppressor can inflict, in the prosecution of his worst designs against the political rights and liberties of the commonwealth. The very semblance of such designs will summon every patriot to his post of observation; and, from a thousand watch-towers of alarm, will the outcry of freedom in danger be heard throughout the land. But there is a conspiracy of a far more malignant influence upon the destinies of the species that is now going on; and which seems to call forth no indignant spirit, and to bring no generous exclamation along with it. Throughout all the recesses of private and domestic history, there is an ascendancy of rank and station against which no stern republican is ever heard to lift his voice—though it be an ascendancy, so exercised, as to be of most noxious operation to the dearest hopes and best interests of humanity. There is a cruel combination of the great against the majesty of the people—we

mean the majesty of the people's worth. There is a haughty unconcern about an inheritance, which, by an unalienable right, should be theirs—we mean their future and everlasting inheritance. There is a deadly invasion made on their rights—we mean their rights of conscience; and, in this our land of boasted privileges, are the low trampled upon by the high—we mean trampled into all the degradation of guilt and of worthlessness. They are utterly bereft of that homage which ought to be rendered to the dignity of their immortal nature; and to minister to the avarice of an imperious master, or to spare the sickly delicacy of the fashionables in our land, are the truth and the piety of our population, and all the virtues of their eternity, most unfeelingly plucked away from them. It belongs to others to fight the battle of their privileges in time. But who that looks with a calculating eye on their duration that never ends, can repress an alarm of a higher order? It belongs to others generously to struggle for the place and the adjustment of the lower orders in the great vessel of the state. But, surely, the question of their place in eternity is of mightier concern than how they are to sit and be accommodated in that pathway vehicle which takes them to their everlasting habitations.

Christianity is, in one sense, the greatest of all levellers. It looks to the elements, and not to the circumstantials of humanity; and, regarding as altogether superficial and temporary the distinctions of this fleeting pilgrimage, it fastens on those points of assimilation which liken the king

upon the throne to the very humblest of his subject population. They are alike in the nakedness of their birth. They are alike in the sureness of their decay. They are alike in the agonies of their dissolution. And after the one is tombed in sepulchral magnificence, and the other is laid in his sod-wrapt grave, are they most fearfully alike in the corruption to which they moulder. But it is with the immortal nature of each that Christianity has to do; and, in both the one and the other, does it behold a nature alike forfeited by guilt, and alike capable of being restored by the grace of an offered salvation. And never do the pomp and the circumstance of externals appear more humiliating, than when, looking onwards to the day of resurrection, we behold the sovereign standing without his crown, and trembling, with the subject by his side, at the bar of heaven's majesty. There the master and the servant will be brought to their reckoning together; and when the one is tried upon the guilt and the malignant influence of his Sabbath companies—and is charged with the profane and careless habit of his household establishment—and is reminded how he kept both himself and his domestics from the solemn ordinance—and is made to perceive the fearful extent of the moral and spiritual mischief which he has wrought as the irreligious head of an irreligious family—and how, among other things, he, under a system of fashionable hypocrisy, so tampered with another's principles as to defile his conscience, and to destroy him —O! how tremendously will the little brief authority in which he now plays his fantastic tricks, turn to

his own condemnation; for, than thus abuse his authority, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

And how comes it, we ask, that any master is armed with a power so destructive over the immortals who are around him? God has given him no such power. The state has not given it to him. There is no law, either human or divine, by which he can enforce any order upon his servants to an act of falsehood, or to an act of impiety. Should any such act of authority be attempted on the part of the master, it should be followed up on the part of the servant by an act of disobedience. Should your master or mistress bid you say not at home, when you know that they are at home, it is your duty to refuse compliance with such an order: and if it be asked, how can this matter be adjusted after such a violent and alarming innovation on the laws of fashionable intercourse, we answer, just by the simple substitution of truth for falsehood—just by prescribing the utterance of, engaged, which is a fact, instead of the utterance of, not at home, which is a lie—just by holding the principles of your servant to be of higher account than the false delicacies of your acquaintance—just by a bold and vigorous recurrence to the simplicity of nature—just by determinedly doing what is right, though the example of a whole host were against you; and by giving impulse to the current of example, when it happens to be moving in a proper direction. And here we are happy to say that fashion has of late been

making a capricious and accidental movement on the side of principle—and to be blunt, and open, and manly, is now on the fair way to be fashionable —and a temper of homelier quality is beginning to infuse itself into the luxuriousness, and the effeminacy, and the palling and excessive complaisance of genteel society—and the staple of cultivated manners is improving in firmness, and frankness, and honesty, and may, at length, by the aid of a principle of Christian rectitude, be so interwoven with the cardinal virtues, as to present a different texture altogether from the soft and the silken degeneracy of modern days.

And that we may not appear the champions of an insurrection against the authority of masters, let us further say, that while it is the duty of clerk or apprentice to refuse the doing of week-day work on the Sabbath, and while it is the duty of servants to refuse the utterance of a prescribed falsehood, and while it is the duty of every dependent, in the service of his master, to serve him only in the Lord —yet this very principle, tending as it may to a rare and occasional act of disobedience, is also the principle which renders every servant who adheres to it a perfect treasure of fidelity, and attachment, and general obedience. This is the way in which to obtain a credit for his refusal, and to stamp upon it a noble consistency. In this way he will, even to the mind of an ungodly master, make up for all his particularities: and should he be what, if a Christian, he will be; should he be, at all times, the most alert in service, and the most patient o. provocation, and the most cordial in affection, and

the most scrupulously honest in the charge and custody of all that is committed to him—then, let the post of drudgery at which he toils be humble as it may, the contrast between the meanness of his office and the dignity of his character will only heighten the reverence that is due to principle, and make it more illustrious. His scruples may, at first, be the topics of displeasure, and afterwards the topics of occasional levity; but, in spite of himself, will his employer be at length constrained to look upon them with respectful toleration. The servant will be to the master a living epistle of Christ, and he may read there what he has not yet perceived in the letter of the New Testament. He may read, in the person of his own domestic, the power and the truth of Christianity. He may positively stand in awe of his own hired servant—and, regarding his bosom as a sanctuary of worth which it were monstrous to violate, will he feel, when tempted to offer one command of impiety, that he cannot, that he dare not.

And, before we conclude, let us, if possible, try to rebuke the wealthy out of their unfeeling indifference to the souls of the poor, by the example of the Saviour. Let those who look on the immortality of the poor as beneath their concern, only look unto Christ—to him who, for the sake of the poorest of us all, became poor Himself, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich. Let them think how the principle of all these offences which we have been attempting to expose, is in the direct face of that principle which prompted, at first, and which still presides over, the whole of the

gospel dispensation. Let them learn a higher reverence for the eternity of those beneath them, by thinking of Him, who, to purchase an inheritance for the poor, and to provide them with the blessings of a preached gospel, unrobed Him of all his greatness; and descended Himself to the lot and the labours of poverty; and toiled, to the beginning of His public ministry, at the work of a carpenter; and submitted to all the horrors of a death which was aggravated by the burden of a world's atonement, and made inconceivably severe, by there being infused into it all the bitterness of the cup of expiation. Think, O think, when some petty design of avarice or vanity would lead you to forget the imperishable souls of those who are beneath you, that you are setting yourselves in diametric opposition to that which lieth nearest to the heart of the Saviour; that you are countervailing the whole tendency of His redemption; that you are thwarting the very object of that enterprise for which all heaven is represented as in motion—and angels are with wonder looking on—and God the Father laid an appointment on the Son of His love—and He, the august personage in whom the magnificent train of prophecy, from the beginning of the world, has its theme and its fulfilment, at length came amongst us, in shrouded majesty, and was led to the cross, like a lamb for the slaughter, and bowed His head in agony, and gave up the ghost.

And here let us address one word more to the masters and mistresses of families. By adopting the reformations to which we have been urging

you, you may do good to the cause of Christianity, and yet not advance, by a single hair-breadth, the Christianity of your own souls. It is not by this one reformation, or, indeed, by any given number of reformations, that you are saved. It is by believing in Christ that men are saved. You may escape, it is sure, a higher degree of punishment, but you will not escape damnation. You may do good to the souls of your servants, by a rigid observance of the lesson of this day. But we seek the good of your own souls, also, and we pronounce upon them that they are in a state of death, till one great act be performed, and one act, too, which does not consist of any number of particular acts, or particular reformations. What shall I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. And he who believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him. Do this, if you want to make the great and important transition for yourselves. Do this, if you want your own name to be blotted out of the book of condemnation. If you seek to have your own persons justified before God, submit to the righteousness of God—even that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, and is unto all and upon all who believe. This is the turning point of your acceptance with the Lawgiver. And at this step, also, in the history of your souls, will there be applied to you a power of motive, and will you be endowed with an obedient sensibility to the influence of motive, which will make it the turning point of a new heart and a new character. The particular reforma-

tion that we have now been urging will be one of a crowd of other reformations; and, in the spirit of Him who pleased not Himself, but gave up His life for others, will you forego all the desires of selfishness and vanity, and look not merely to your own things, but also to the things of others.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE LOVE OF MONEY.

"If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above."—Job xxxi. 24—28.

What is worthy of remark in this passage is, that a certain affection, only known among the votaries of Paganism, should be classed under the same character and have the same condemnation with an affection, not only known, but allowed, nay cherished into habitual supremacy, all over Christendom. How universal is it among those who are in pursuit of wealth, to make gold their hope, and, among those who are in possession of wealth, to make fine gold their confidence! Yet we are here told that this is virtually as complete a renunciation of God as to practise some of the worst charms of idolatry. And it might perhaps serve to unsettle the vanity of those who, unsuspicious of the disease that is in their hearts, are wholly given over to this world, and wholly without alarm in their anticipations of another,—could we convince them that the most reigning and resistless desire by which they are actuated, stamps the same perversity on them, in the sight of God,

as he sees to be in those who are worshippers of the sun in the firmament, or are offering incense to the moon, as the queen of heaven.

We recoil from an idolater, as from one who labours under a great moral derangement, in suffering his regards to be carried away from the true God to an idol. But, is it not just the same derangement, on the part of man, that he should love any created good, and in the enjoyment of it lose sight of the Creator—that he should delight himself with the use and the possession of a gift, and be unaffected by the circumstance of its having been put into his hands by a giver—that, thoroughly absorbed with the present and the sensible gratification, there should be no room left for the movements of duty or regard to the Being who furnished him with the materials, and endowed him with the organs, of every gratification,—that he should thus lavish all his desires on the surrounding materialism, and fetch from it all his delights, while the thought of Him who formed it is habitually absent from his heart—that, in the play of those attractions that subsist between him and the various objects in the neighbourhood of his person, there should be the same want of reference to God, as there is in the play of those attractions which subsist between a piece of unconscious matter and the other matter that is around it—that all the influences which operate upon the human will should emanate from so many various points in the mechanism of what is formed, but that no practical or ascendant influence should come down upon it from the presiding and the preserving Deity? Why, if such be man, he could not be

otherwise, though there were no Deity. The part he sustains in the world is the very same that it would have been, had the world sprung into being of itself; or, without an originating mind, had maintained its being from eternity. He just puts forth the evolutions of his own nature, as one of the component individuals in a vast independent system of nature, made up of many parts and many individuals. In hungering for what is agreeable to his senses, or recoiling from what is bitter or unsuitable to them, he does so without thinking of God, or borrowing any impulse to his own will from any thing he knows or believes to be the will of God. Religion has just as little to do with those daily movements of his which are voluntary, as it has to do with the growth of his body, which is involuntary; or, as it has to do, in other words, with the progress and the phenomena of vegetation. With a mind that ought to know God, and a conscience that ought to award to Him the supreme jurisdiction, he lives as effectually without Him, as if he had no mind and no conscience; and, bating a few transient visitations of thought, and a few regularities of outward and mechanical observation, do we behold man running, and willing, and preparing, and enjoying, just as if there was no other portion than the creature—just as if the world, and its visible elements, formed the all with which he had to do.

I wish to impress upon you the distinction that there is between the love of money, and the love of what money purchases. Either of these affections may equally displace God from the heart. But, there is a malignity and an inveteracy of atheism in the former which does not belong to the latter,

and in virtue of which it may be seen that the love of money is, indeed, the root of all evil.

When we indulge the love of that which is purchased by money, the materials of gratification, and the organs of gratification are present with each other—just as in the enjoyments of the inferior animals, and just as in all the simple and immediate enjoyments of man; such as the tasting of food, or the smelling of a flower. There is an adaptation of the senses to certain external objects, and there is a pleasure arising out of that adaptation, and it is a pleasure which may be felt by man, along with a right and a full infusion of godliness. The primitive Christians, for example, ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. But, in the case of every unconverted man, the pleasure has no such accompaniment. He carries in his heart no recognition of that hand, by the opening of which it is, that the means and the materials of enjoyment are placed within his reach. The matter of the enjoyment is all with which he is conversant. The Author of the enjoyment is unheeded. The avidity with which he rushes onward to any of the direct gratifications of nature bears a resemblance to the avidity with which one of the lower creation rushes to its food, or to its water, or to the open field, where it gambols in all the wantonness of freedom, and finds a high-breathed joy in the very strength and velocity of its movements. And the atheism of the former, who has a mind for the sense and knowledge of his Creator, is often as entire as the atheism of the latter, who has it not. Man, who ought to look

to the primary cause of all his blessings, because he is capable of seeing thus far, is often as blind to God, in the midst of enjoyment, as the animal who is not capable of seeing him. He can trace the stream to its fountain; but still he drinks of the stream with as much greediness of pleasure, and as little recognition of its source, as the animal beneath him. In other words, his atheism, while tasting the bounties of Providence, is just as complete, as is the atheism of the inferior animals. But theirs proceeds from their incapacity of knowing God. His proceeds from his not liking to retain God in his knowledge. He may come under the power of godliness, if he would. But he chooses rather that the power of sensuality should lord it over him, and his whole man is engrossed with the objects of sensuality.

But a man differs from an animal in being something more than a sensitive being. He is also a reflective being. He has the power of thought, and inference, and anticipation, to signalize him above the beasts of the field, or of the forest; and yet will it be found, in the case of every natural man, that the exercise of those powers, so far from having carried him nearer, has only widened his departure from God, and given a more deliberate and wilful character to his atheism, than if he had been without them altogether.

In virtue of the powers of mind which belong to him, he can carry his thoughts beyond the present desires and the present gratification. He can calculate on the visitations of future desire, and on the means of its gratification. He can not only

follow out the impulse of hunger that is now upon him; he can look onwards to the successive and recurring impulses of hunger which await him, and he can devise expedients for relieving it. Out of that great stream of supply, which comes direct from heaven to earth, for the sustenance of all its living generations, he can draw off and appropriate a separate rill of conveyance, and direct it into a reservoir for himself. He can enlarge the capacity, or he can strengthen the embankments of this reservoir. By doing the one, he augments his proportion of this common tide of wealth which circulates through the world, and by doing the other, he augments his security for holding it in perpetual possession. The animal who drinks out of the stream thinks not whence it issues. But man thinks of the reservoir which yields to him his portion of it. And he looks no further. He thinks not that to fill it, there must be a great and original fountain, out of which there issueth a mighty flood of abundance for the purpose of distribution among all the tribes and families of the world. He stops short at the secondary and artificial fabric which he himself hath formed, and out of which, as from a spring, he draws his own peculiar enjoyments; and never thinks either of his own peculiar supply fluctuating with the variations of the primary spring, or of connecting these variations with the will of the great but unseen director of all things. It is true, that if this main and originating fountain be, at any time, less copious in its emission, he will have less to draw from it to his own reservoir; and in that very proportion will

his share of the bounties of Providence be reduced. But still it is to the well, or receptacle, of his own striking out that he looks, as his main security for the relief of nature's wants, and the abundant supply of nature's enjoyments. It is upon his own work that he depends in this matter, and not on the work or the will of Him who is the Author of nature ; who giveth rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filleth every heart with food and gladness. And thus it is that the reason of man, and the retrospective power of man, still fail to carry him, by an ascending process, to the First Cause. He stops at the instrumental cause, which, by his own wisdom and his own power, he has put into operation. In a word, the man's understanding is overrun with atheism, as well as his desires. The intellectual as well as the sensitive part of his consitution seems to be infected with it. When, like the instinctive and unreflecting animal, he engages in the act of direct enjoyment, he is like it, too, in its atheism. When he rises above the animal, and, in the exercise of his higher and larger faculties, he engages in the act of providing for enjoyment, he still carries his atheism along with him.

A sum of money is, in all its functions, equivalent to such a reservoir. Take one year with another, and the annual consumption of the world cannot exceed the annual produce which issues from the storehouse of Him who is the great and the bountiful Provider of all its families. The money that is in any man's possession represents the share which he can appropriate to himself of this produce. If it be a large sum, it is like a capacious reservoir on

the bank of the river of abundance. If it be laid out on firm and stable securities, still it is like a firmly embanked reservoir. The man who toils to increase his money is like a man who toils to enlarge the capacity of his reservoir. The man who suspects a flaw in his securities, or who apprehends, in the report of failures and fluctuations, that his money is all to flow away from him, is like a man who apprehends a flaw in the embankments of his reservoir. Meanwhile, in all the care that is thus expended, either on the money or on the magazine, the originating source, out of which there is imparted to the one all its real worth, or there is imparted to the other all its real fulness, is scarcely ever thought of. Let God turn the earth into a barren desert, and the money ceases to be convertible to any purpose of enjoyment; or let Him lock up that magazine of great and general supply, out of which He showers abundance among our habitations, and all the subordinate magazines formed beside the wonted stream of liberality, would remain empty. But all this is forgotten by the vast majority of our unthoughtful and unreflecting species. The patience of God is still unexhausted; and the seasons still roll in kindly succession over the heads of an ungrateful generation; and that period, when the machinery of our present system shall stop and be taken to pieces has not yet arrived; and that Spirit, who will not always strive with the children of men, is still prolonging His experiment on the powers and the perversities of our moral nature; and still suspending the edict of dissolution, by

which this earth and these heavens are at length to pass away. So that the sun still shines upon us; and the clouds still drop upon us; and the earth still puts forth the bloom and the beauty of its luxuriance; and all the ministers of heaven's liberality still walk their annual round, and scatter plenty over the face of an alienated world; and the whole of nature continues as smiling in promise, and as sure in fulfilment, as in the days of our forefathers; and out of her large and universal granary is there, in every returning year, as rich a conveyance of aliment as before, to the populous family in whose behalf it is opened. But it is the business of many among that population, each to erect his own separate granary, and to replenish it out of the general store, and to feed himself and his dependents out of it. And he is right in so doing. But he is not right in looking to his own peculiar receptacle, as if it were the first and the emanating fountain of all his enjoyments. He is not right in thus idolizing the work of his own hands—awarding no glory and no confidence to Him in whose hands is the key of that great storehouse, out of which every lesser storehouse of man derives its fulness. He is not right, in labouring after the money which purchaseth all things, to avert the earnestness of his regards from the Being who provides all things. He is not right, in thus building his security on that which is subordinate, unheeding and unmindful of Him who is supreme. It is not right, that silver and gold, though unshaped into statuary, should still be doing, in this enlightened land, what the images

of Paganism once did. It is not right, that they should thus supplant the deference which is owing to the God and the governor of all things—or that each man amongst us should, in the secret homage of trust and satisfaction which he renders to his bills, and his deposits, and his deeds of property and possession, endow these various articles with the same moral ascendancy over his heart, as the household gods of antiquity had over the idolaters of antiquity—making them as effectually usurp the place of the divinity, and dethrone the one Monarch of heaven and earth from that pre-eminence of trust and of affection that belongs to him.

He who makes a god of his pleasure, renders to this idol the homage of his senses. He who makes a god of his wealth, renders to this idol the homage of his mind; and he, therefore, of the two, is the more hopeless and determined idolater. The former is goaded on to his idolatry, by the power of appetite. The latter cultivates his with wilful and deliberate perseverance; consecrates his very highest powers to its service; embarks in it, not with the heat of passion, but, with the coolness of steady and calculating principle; fully gives up his reason and his time, and all the faculties of his understanding, as well as all the desires of his heart, to the great object of a fortune in this world; makes the acquirement of gain the settled aim, and the prosecution of that aim the settled habit of his existence; sits the whole day long at the post of his ardent and unremitting devotions; and, as he labours at the desk of his counting-house, has his soul just as effectually seduced from the living

God to an object distinct from Him, and contrary to Him, as if the ledger over which he was bending was a book of mystical characters, written in honour of some golden idol placed before him, and with a view to render this idol propitious to himself and to his family. Baal and Moloch were not more substantially the gods of rebellious Israel, than Mammon is the god of all his affections. To the fortune he has reared, or is rearing, for himself and his descendants, he ascribes all the power and all the independence of a divinity. With the wealth he has gotten by his own hands, does he feel himself as independent of God, as the Pagan does, who, happy in the fancied protection of an image made with his own hand, suffers no disturbance to his quiet, from any thought of the real but the unknown Deity. His confidence is in his treasure, and not in God. It is there that he places all his safety and all his sufficiency. It is not on the Supreme Being, conceived in the light of a real and a personal agent, that he places his dependence. It is on a mute and material statue of his own erection. It is wealth which stands to him in the place of God—to which he awards the credit of all his enjoyments—which he looks to as the emanating fountain of all his present sufficiency—from which he gathers his fondest expectations of all the bright and fancied blessedness that is yet before him—on which he rests as the firmest and stablest foundation of all that the heart can wish, or the eye can long after, both for himself and for his children. It matters not to him, that all his enjoyment comes from a primary fountain, and that his wealth

is only an intermediate reservoir. It matters not to him, that, if God were to set a seal upon the door of the upper storehouse in heaven, or to blast and to burn up all the fruitfulness of earth, he would reduce, to the worthlessness of dross, all the silver and the gold that abound in it. Still the gold and the silver are his gods. His own fountain is between him and the fountain of original supply. His wealth is between him and God. Its various lodging-places, whether in the bank, or in the place of registration, or in the depository of wills and title-deeds—these are the sanctuaries of his secret worship—these are the high-places of his adoration; and never did devout Israelite look with more intentness towards Mount Zion, and with his face towards Jerusalem, than he does to his wealth, as to the mountain and stronghold of his security. Nor could the Supreme be more effectually deposed from the homage of trust and gratitude than He actually is, though his wealth were recalled from its various investments; and turned into one mass of gold; and cast into a piece of molten statuary; and enshrined on a pedestal, around which all his household might assemble, and make it the object of their family devotions; and plied every hour of every day with all the fooleries of a senseless and degrading Paganism. It is thus, that God may keep up the charge of idolatry against us, even after all its images have been overthrown. It is thus that dissuasives from idolatry are still addressed, in the New Testament, to the pupils of a new and better dispensation; that little children are warned against idols; and

all of us are warned to flee from covetousness, which is idolatry.

To look no further than to fortune as the dispenser of all the enjoyments which money can purchase, is to make that fortune stand in the place of God. It is to make sense shut out faith, and to rob the King eternal and invisible of that supremacy, to which all the blessings of human existence, and all the varieties of human condition, ought, in every instance, and in every particular, to be referred. But, as we have already remarked, the love of money is one affection, and the love of what is purchased by money is another. It was, at first, we have no doubt, loved for the sake of the good things which it enabled its possessor to acquire. But whether, as the result of associations in the mind so rapid as to escape the notice of our own consciousness—or as the fruit of an infection running by sympathy among all men busily engaged in the prosecution of wealth, as the supreme good of their being—certain it is, that money, originally pursued for the sake of other things, comes at length to be prized for its own sake. And, perhaps, there is no one circumstance which serves more to liken the love of money to the most irrational of the heathen idolatries, than that it at length passes into the love of money for itself; and acquires a most enduring power over the human affections, separately altogether from the power of purchase and of command which belongs to it, over the proper and original objects of human desire. The first thing which set man agoing in the pursuit of wealth, was that, through

it, as an intervening medium, he found his way to other enjoyments; and it proves him, as we have observed, capable of a higher reach of anticipation than the beasts of the field, or the fowls of the air, that he is thus able to calculate, and to foresee, and to build up a provision for the wants of futurity. But, mark how soon this boasted distinction of his faculties is overthrown, and how near to each other lie the dignity and the debasement of the human understanding. If it evinced a loftier mind in man than in the inferior animals, that he invented money, and by the acquisition of it can both secure abundance for himself, and transmit this abundance to the future generations of his family—what have we to offer, in vindication of this intellectual eminence, when we witness how soon it is, that the pursuit of wealth ceases to be rational?—How, instead of being prosecuted as an instrument, either for the purchase of ease, or the purchase of enjoyment, both the ease and enjoyment of a whole life are rendered up as sacrifices at its shrine?—How, from being sought after as a minister of gratification to the appetites of nature, it at length brings nature into bondage, and robs her of all her simple delights, and pours the infusion of wormwood into the currency of her feelings?—making that man sad who ought to be cheerful, and that man who ought to rejoice in his present abundance, filling him either with the cares of an ambition which never will be satisfied, or with the apprehensions of a distress which, in all its pictured and exaggerated evils, will never be realized. And it is wonderful, it is passing wonderful, that wealth,

which derives all that is true and sterling in its worth from its subserviency to other advantages, should, apart from all thought about this subserviency, be made the object of such fervent and fatiguing devotion. Insomuch, that never did Indian devotee inflict upon himself a severer agony at the footstool of his Paganism, than those devotees of wealth who, for its acquirement as their ultimate object, will forego all the uses for which alone it is valuable—will give up all that is genuine or tranquil in the pleasures of life; and will pierce themselves through with many sorrows; and will undergo all the fiercer tortures of the mind; and, instead of employing what they have to smooth their passage through the world, will, upon the hazardous sea of adventure, turn the whole of this passage into a storm—thus exalting wealth, from a servant unto a lord, who, in return for the homage that he obtains from his worshippers, exercises them, like Rehoboam his subjects of old, not with whips but with scorpions—with consuming anxiety, with never-sated desire, with brooding apprehension, and its frequent and ever-flitting spectres, and the endless jealousies of competition with men as intently devoted, and as emulous of a high place in the temple of their common idolatry, as themselves. And, without going to the higher exhibitions of this propensity, in all its rage and in all its restlessness, we have only to mark its workings on the walk of even and every-day citizenship; and there see, how, in the hearts even of its most common-place votaries, wealth is followed after, for its own sake; how

unassociated with all for which reason pronounces it to be of estimation, but, in virtue of some mysterious and undefinable charm, operating not on any principle of the judgment, but on the utter perversity of judgment, money has come to be of higher account than all that is purchased by money, and has attained a rank co-ordinate with that which our Saviour assigns to the life and to the body of man, in being reckoned more than meat and more than raiment.—Thus making that which is subordinate to be primary, and that which is primary subordinate; transferring, by a kind of fascination, the affections away from wealth in use, to wealth in idle and unemployed possession,—insomuch, that the most welcome intelligence you could give to the proprietor of many a snug deposit, in some place of secure and progressive accumulation, would be, that he should never require any part either of it or of its accumulation back again for the purpose of expenditure—and that, to the end of his life, every new year should witness another unimpaired addition to the bulk or the aggrandizement of his idol. And it would just heighten his enjoyment, could he be told, with prophetic certainty, that this process of undisturbed augmentation would go on with his children's children, to the last age of the world; that the economy of each succeeding race of descendants would leave the sum with its interest untouched, and the place of its sanctuary unviolated; and, that through a series of indefinite generations, would the magnitude ever grow, and the lustre ever brighten, of that household god, which he had erected for his own

senseless adoration, and bequeathed as an object of as senseless adoration to his family.

We have the authority of that word which has been pronounced a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, that it cannot have two masters, or that there is not room in it for two great and ascendant affections. The engrossing power of one such affection is expressly affirmed of the love for Mammon, or the love for money thus named and characterized as an idol. Or, in other words, if the love of money be in the heart, the love of God is not there. If a man be trusting in uncertain riches, he is not trusting in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. If his heart be set upon covetousness, it is set upon an object of idolatry. The true divinity is moved away from His place; and, worse than atheism which would only leave it empty, has the love of wealth raised another divinity upon His throne. So that covetousness offers a more daring and positive aggression on the right and territory of the Godhead, than even infidelity. The latter would only desolate the sanctuary of heaven; the former would set up an abomination in the midst of it. It not only strips God of love and of confidence, which are his prerogatives, but it transfers them to another. And little does the man who is proud in honour, but, at the same time, proud and peering in ambition—little does he think, that, though acquitted in the eye of all his fellows, there still remains an atrocity of a deeper character than even that of atheism, with which he is chargeable. Let him just take an account of his mind, amid the labours of his

merchandise, and he will find that the living God has no ascendancy there; but that wealth just as much as if personified into life, and agency, and power, wields over him all the ascendancy of God. Where his treasure is, his heart is also; and, linking as he does his main hope with its increase, and his main fear with its fluctuations and its failures, he has as effectually dethroned the Supreme from his heart, and deified an usurper in his room, as if fortune had been embodied into a goddess, and he were in the habit of repairing, with a crowd of other worshippers, to her temple. She, in fact, is the dispenser of that which he chiefly prizes in existence. A smile from her is worth all the promises of the Eternal, and her threatening frown more dreadful to the imagination than all his terrors.

And the disease is as near to universal as it is virulent. Wealth is the goddess whom all the world worshippeth. There is many a city in our empire, of which, with an eye of apostolical discernment, it may be seen, that it is almost wholly given over to idolatry. If a man look no higher than to his money for his enjoyments, then money is his god. It is the god of his dependence, and the god upon whom his heart is staid. Or if, apart from other enjoyments, it, by some magical power of its own, has gotten the ascendancy, then still it is followed after as the supreme good; and there is an actual supplanting of the living God. He is robbed of the gratitude that we owe him for our daily sustenance; for, instead of receiving it as if it came direct out of his hand, we receive it as if it came from the hand of a secondary agent, to whom we ascribe

all the stability and independence of God. This wealth, in fact, obscures to us the character of God, as the real though unseen Author of our various blessings; and as if by a material intervention, does it hide from the perception of nature, the hand which feeds, and clothes, and maintains us in life, and in all the comforts and necessaries of life. It just has the effect of thickening still more that impalpable veil which lies between God and the eye of the senses. We lose all discernment of him as the giver of our comforts; and coming, as they appear to do, from that wealth which our fancies have raised into a living personification, does this idol stand before us, not as a deputy but as a substitute for that Being, with whom it is that we really have to do. All this goes both to widen and to fortify that disruption which has taken place between God and the world. It adds the power of one great master idol to the seducing influence of all the lesser idolatries. When the liking and the confidence of men are towards money, there is no direct intercourse, either by the one or the other of these affections towards God; and, in proportion as he sends forth his desires, and rests his security on the former, in that very proportion does he renounce God as his hope, and God as his dependence.

And to advert, for one moment, to the misery of this affection, as well as to its sinfulness. He, over whom it reigns, feels a worthlessness in his present wealth, after it is gotten; and when to this we add the restlessness of a yet unsated appetite, lording it over all his convictions, and panting for more; when, to the dulness of his actual satisfaction

in all the riches that he has, we add his still unquenched, and, indeed, unquenchable desire for the riches that he has not; when we reflect that as, in the pursuit of wealth, he widens the circle of his operation, so he lengthens out the line of his open and hazardous exposure, and multiplies, along the extent of it, those vulnerable points from which another and another dart of anxiety may enter into his heart; when he feels himself as if floating on an ocean of contingency, on which, perhaps, he is only borne up by the breath of a credit that is fictitious, and which, liable to burst every moment, may leave him to sink under the weight of his overladen speculation; when, suspended on the doubtful result of his bold and uncertain adventure, he dreads the tidings of disaster in every arrival, and lives in a continual agony of feeling, kept up by the crowd and turmoil of his manifold distractions, and so overspreading the whole compass of his thoughts, as to leave not one narrow space for the thought of eternity;—will any beholder just look to the mind of this unhappy man, thus tost and bewildered, and thrown into a general unceasing frenzy, made out of many fears and many agitations, and not say, that the bird of the air which sends forth its unreflecting song, and lives on the fortuitous bounty of Providence, is not higher in the scale of enjoyment than he? And how much more, then, the quiet Christian beside him, who, in possession of food and raiment, has that godliness with contentment which is great gain—who, with the peace of heaven in his heart, and the glories of heaven in his eye, has found out the true philosophy of existence; has

sought a portion where alone a portion can be found, and, in bidding away from his mind the love of money, has bidden away all the cross and all the carefulness along with it.

Death will soon break up every swelling enterprise of ambition, and put upon it a most cruel and degrading mockery. And it is, indeed, an affecting sight, to behold the workings of this world's infatuation among so many of our fellow mortals nearing and nearing every day to eternity, and yet, instead of taking heed to that which is before them, mistaking their temporary vehicle for their abiding home—and spending all their time and all their thought upon its accommodations. It is all the doing of our great adversary, thus to invest the trifles of a day in such characters of greatness and durability; and it is, indeed, one of the most formidable of his wiles. And whatever may be the instrument of reclaiming men from this delusion, it certainly is not any argument either about the shortness of life, or the certainty and awfulness of its approaching termination. On this point man is capable of a stout-hearted resistance, even to ocular demonstration; nor do we know a more striking evidence of the derangement which must have passed upon the human faculties, than to see how, in despite of arithmetic,—how, in despite of manifold experience—how, in despite of all his gathering wrinkles, and all his growing infirmities—how, in despite of the ever-lessening distance between him and his sepulchre, and of all the tokens of preparation for the onset of the last messenger, with which, in the shape of weakness, and breathlessness, and dimness of eyes, he is visited; will the feeble and

asthmatic man still shake his silver locks in all the glee and transport of which he is capable, when he hears of his gainful adventures, and his new accumulations. Nor can we tell how near he must get to his grave, or how far on he must advance in the process of dying, ere gain cease to delight, and the idol of wealth cease to be dear to him. But when we see that the topic is trade and its profits, which lights up his faded eye with the glow of its chiefest ecstasy, we are as much satisfied that he leaves the world with all his treasure there, and all the desires of his heart there, as if, acting what is told of the miser's death-bed, he made his bills and his parchments of security the companions of his bosom, and the last movements of his life were a fearful, tenacious, determined grasp, of what to him formed the all for which life was valuable.

DISCOURSE IX.

THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF A NEW AFFECTION.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." —1 JOHN ii. 15.

THERE are two ways in which a practical moralist may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world—either by a demonstration of the world's vanity, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or, by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon not to resign an old affection, which shall have nothing to succeed it, but to exchange an old affection for a new one. My purpose is to show, that from the constitution of our nature, the former method is altogether incompetent and ineffectual—and that the latter method will alone suffice for the rescue and recovery of the heart from the wrong affection that domineers over it. After having accomplished this purpose, I shall attempt a few practical observations.

Love may be regarded in two different conditions. The first is, when its object is at a distance, and then it becomes love in a state of desire. The second is, when its object is in possession, and then it becomes love in a state of indulgence. Under

the impulse of desire, man feels himself urged onward in some path or pursuit of activity for its gratification. The faculties of his mind are put into busy exercise. In the steady direction of one great and engrossing interest, his attention is recalled from the many reveries into which it might otherwise have wandered; and the powers of his body are forced away from an indolence in which it else might have languished; and that time is crowded with occupation, which but for some object of keen and devoted ambition, might have drivelled along in successive hours of weariness and distaste—and though hope does not always enliven, and success does not always crown this career of exertion, yet in the midst of this very variety, and with the alternations of occasional disappointment, is the machinery of the whole man kept in a sort of congenial play, and upholden in that tone and temper which are most agreeable to it. Insomuch, that if, through the extirpation of that desire which forms the originating principle of all this movement, the machinery were to stop, and to receive no impulse from another desire substituted in its place, the man would be left with all his propensities to action in a state of most painful and unnatural abandonment. A sensitive being suffers, and is in violence, if, after having thoroughly rested from his fatigue, or been relieved from his pain, he continue in possession of powers without any excitement to these powers; if he possess a capacity of desire without having an object of desire; or if he have a spare energy upon his person, without a counterpart, and without a stimulus to call it into operation.

The misery of such a condition is often realized by him who is retired from business, or who is retired from law, or who is even retired from the occupations of the chase, and of the gaming table. Such is the demand of our nature for an object in pursuit, that no accumulation of previous success can extinguish it—and thus it is, that the most prosperous merchant, and the most victorious general, and the most fortunate gamester, when the labour of their respective vocations has come to a close, are often found to languish in the midst of all their acquisitions, as if out of their kindred and rejoicing element. It is quite in vain with such a constitutional appetite for employment in man, to attempt cutting away from him the spring or the principle of one employment, without providing him with another. The whole heart and habit will rise in resistance against such an undertaking. The else unoccupied female who spends the hours of every evening at some play of hazard, knows as well as you, that the pecuniary gain, or the honourable triumph of a successful contest, are altogether paltry. It is not such a demonstration of vanity as this that will force her away from her dear and delightful occupation. The habit cannot so be displaced, as to leave nothing but a negative and cheerless vacancy behind it—though it may so be supplanted as to be followed up by another habit of employment, to which the power of some new affection has constrained her. It is willingly suspended, for example, on any single evening, should the time that wont to be allotted to gaming, require to be spent on the preparations of an

approaching assembly. The ascendant power of a second affection will do, what no exposition however forcible, of the folly and worthlessness of the first, ever could effectuate. And it is the same in the great world. We shall never be able to arrest any of its leading pursuits, by a naked demonstration of their vanity. It is quite in vain to think of stopping one of these pursuits in any way else, but by stimulating to another. In attempting to bring a worldly man intent and busied with the prosecution of his objects to a dead stand, we have not merely to encounter the charm which he annexes to these objects—but we have to encounter the pleasure which he feels in the very prosecution of them. It is not enough, then, that we dissipate the charm, by a moral, and eloquent, and affecting exposure of its illusiveness. We must address to the eye of his mind another object, with a charm powerful enough to dispossess the first of its influences, and to engage him in some other prosecution as full of interest, and hope, and congenial activity, as the former. It is this which stamps an impotency on all moral and pathetic declamation about the insignificance of the world. A man will no more consent to the misery of being without an object, because that object is a trifle, or of being without a pursuit, because that pursuit terminates in some frivolous or fugitive acquirement, than he will voluntarily submit himself to the torture, because that torture is to be of short duration. If to be without desire and without exertion altogether, is a state of violence and discomfort, then the present desire, with its corre-

spondent train of exertion, is not to be got rid of simply by destroying it. It must be by substituting another desire, and another line or habit of exertion in its place—and the most effectual way of withdrawing the mind from one object, is not by turning it away upon desolate and unpeopled vacancy—but by presenting to its regards another object still more alluring.

These remarks apply not merely to love considered in its state of desire for an object not yet obtained. They apply also to love considered in its state of indulgence, or placid gratification, with an object already in possession. It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction. At least, it is very seldom, that this is done through the instrumentality of reasoning. It may be done by excessive pampering—but it is almost never done by the mere force of mental determination. But what cannot be thus destroyed, may be dispossessed—and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind. It is thus, that the boy ceases, at length, to be the slave of his appetite, but it is because a manlier taste has now brought it into subordination—and that the youth ceases to idolize pleasure, but it is because the idol of wealth has become the stronger and gotten the ascendancy—and that even the love of money ceases to have the mastery over the heart of many a thriving citizen, but it is because drawn into the whirl of city politics, another affection has been wrought into his moral system, and he is now lorded over by the

love of power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some one object or other, this is unconquerable. Its adhesion to that on which it has fastened the preference of its regards, cannot willingly be overcome by the rending away of a simple separation. It can be done only by the application of something else, to which it may feel the adhesion of a still stronger and more powerful preference. Such is the grasping tendency of the human heart, that it must have a something to lay hold of—and which, if wrested away without the substitution of another something in its place, would leave a void and a vacancy as painful to the mind, as hunger is to the natural system. It may be dispossessed of one object, or of any, but it cannot be desolated of all. Let there be a breathing and a sensitive heart, but without a liking and without affinity to any of the things that are around it; and, in a state of cheerless abandonment, it would be alive to nothing but the burden of its own consciousness, and feel it to be intolerable. It would make no difference to its owner, whether he dwelt in the midst of a gay and goodly world; or, placed afar beyond the outskirts of creation, he dwelt a solitary unit in dark and unpeopled nothingness. The heart must have something to cling to—and never, by its own voluntary consent, will it so denude itself of all its attachments, that there shall not be one remaining object that can draw or solicit it.

The misery of a heart thus bereft of all relish for

that which wont to minister enjoyment, is strikingly exemplified in those, who, satiated with indulgence, have been so belaboured, as it were, with the variety and the poignancy of the pleasurable sensations they have experienced, that they are at length fatigued out of all capacity for sensation whatever. The disease of ennui is more frequent in the French metropolis, where amusement is more exclusively the occupation of the higher classes, than it is in the British metropolis, where the longings of the heart are more diversified by the resources of business and politics. There are the votaries of fashion, who, in this way, have at length become the victims of fashionable excess—in whom the very multitude of their enjoyments, has at last extinguished their power of enjoyment—who, with the gratifications of art and nature at command, now look upon all that is around them with an eye of tastelessness—who, plied with the delights of sense and of splendour even to weariness, and incapable of higher delights, have come to the end of all their perfection, and like Solomon of old, found it to be vanity and vexation. The man whose heart has thus been turned into a desert, can vouch for the insupportable languor which must ensue, when one affection is thus plucked away from the bosom, without another to replace it. It is not necessary that a man receive pain from any thing, in order to become miserable. It is barely enough that he looks with distaste to every thing—and in that asylum which is the repository of minds out of joint, and where the organ of feeling as well as the organ of intellect, has been impaired, it is not in the cell of loud and frantic outcries, where we shall

meet with the acmé of mental suffering. But that is the individual who outpeers in wretchedness all his fellows, who, throughout the whole expanse of nature and society, meets not an object that has at all the power to detain or to interest him; who, neither in earth beneath nor in heaven above, knows of a single charm to which his heart can send forth one desirous or responding movement; to whom the world, in his eye a vast and empty desolation, has left him nothing but his own consciousness to feed upon—dead to all that is without him, and alive to nothing but to the load of his own torpid and useless existence.

It will now be seen, perhaps, why it is that the heart keeps by its present affections with so much tenacity—when the attempt is, to do them away by a mere process of extirpation. It will not consent to be so desolated. The strong man, whose dwelling-place is there, may be compelled to give way to another occupier—but unless another stronger than he, has power to dispossess and to succeed him, he will keep his present lodgment unviolable. The heart would revolt against its own emptiness. It could not bear to be so left in a state of waste and cheerless insipidity. The moralist who tries such a process of dispossession as this upon the heart, is thwarted at every step by the recoil of its own mechanism. You have all heard that Nature abhors a vacuum. Such at least is the nature of the heart, that though the room which is in it may change one inmate for another, it cannot be left void without the pain of most intolerable suffering. It is not enough then to argue the folly of an existing affection. It is not enough, in the terms of a forcible

or an affecting demonstration, to make good the evanescence of its object. It may not even be enough to associate the threats and the terrors of some coming vengeance, with the indulgence of it. The heart may still resist the every application, by obedience to which, it would finally be conducted to a state so much at war with all its appetites as that of downright inanition. So to tear away an affection from the heart, as to leave it bare of all its regards and of all its preferences, were a hard and hopeless undertaking—and it would appear, as if the alone powerful engine of dispossession were to bring the mastery of another affection to bear upon it.

We know not a more sweeping interdict upon the affections of Nature, than that which is delivered by the Apostle in the verse before us. To bid a man into whom there has not yet entered the great and ascendant influence of the principle of regeneration, to bid him withdraw his love from all the things that are in the world, is to bid him give up all the affections that are in his heart. The world is the all of a natural man. He has not a taste nor a desire, that points not to a something placed within the confines of its visible horizon. He loves nothing above it, and he cares for nothing beyond it; and to bid him love not the world, is to pass a sentence of expulsion on all the inmates of his bosom. To estimate the magnitude and the difficulty of such a surrender, let us only think that it were just as arduous to prevail on him not to love wealth, which is but one of the things in the world, as to prevail on him to set wilful fire to his own property. This he might do with sore and painful reluctance, if he

saw that the salvation of his life hung upon it. But this he would do willingly, if he saw that a new property of tenfold value was instantly to emerge from the wreck of the old one. In this case there is something more than the mere displacement of an affection. There is the overbearing of one affection by another. But to desolate his heart of all love for the things of the world, without the substitution of any love in its place, were to him a process of as unnatural violence, as to destroy all the things that he has in the world, and give him nothing in their room. So that, if to love not the world be indispensable to one's Christianity, then the crucifixion of the old man is not too strong a term to mark that transition in his history, when all old things are done away and all things become new.

We hope that by this time, you understand the impotency of a mere demonstration of this world's insignificance. Its sole practical effect, if it had any, would be to leave the heart in a state which to every heart is insupportable, and that is a mere state of nakedness and negation. You may remember the fond and unbroken tenacity with which your heart has often recurred to pursuits, over the utter frivolity of which it sighed and wept but yesterday. The arithmetic of your short-lived days, may on Sabbath make the clearest impression upon your understanding—and from his fancied bed of death, may the preacher cause a voice to descend in rebuke and mockery on all the pursuits of earthliness—and as he pictures before you the fleeting generations of men, with the absorbing grave, whither all the joys and interests of the world

hasten to their sure and speedy oblivion, may you, touched and solemnized by his argument, feel for a moment as if on the eve of a practical and permanent emancipation from a scene of so much vanity. But the morrow comes, and the business of the world, and the objects of the world, and the moving forces of the world come along with it—and the machinery of the heart, in virtue of which it must have something to grasp, or something to adhere to, brings it under a kind of moral necessity to be actuated just as before—and in utter repulsion towards a state so unkindly as that of being frozen out both of delight and of desire, does it feel all the warmth and the urgency of its wonted solicitations—nor in the habit and history of the whole man, can we detect so much as one symptom of the new creature—so that the church, instead of being to him a school of obedience, has been a mere sauntering place for the luxury of a passing and theatrical emotion; and the preaching which is mighty to compel the attendance of multitudes, which is mighty to still and to solemnize the hearers into a kind of tragic sensibility, which is mighty in the play of variety and vigour that it can keep up around the imagination, is not mighty to the pulling down of strong holds.

The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world, by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be prevailed upon to admit into its prefer-

ence another, who shall subordinate the world, and bring it down from its wonted ascendancy? If the throne which is placed there must have an occupier, and the tyrant that now reigns has occupied it wrongfully, he may not leave a bosom which would rather detain him than be left in desolation. But may he not give way to the lawful sovereign, appearing with every charm that can secure His willing admittance, and taking unto himself His great power to subdue the moral nature of man, and to reign over it? In a word, if the way to disengage the heart from the positive love of one great and ascendant object, is to fasten it in positive love to another, then it is not by exposing the worthlessness of the former, but by addressing to the mental eye the worth and excellence of the latter, that all old things are to be done away and all things are to become new.

To obliterate all our present affections by simply expunging them, and so as to leave the seat of them unoccupied, would be to destroy the old character, and to substitute no new character in its place. But when they take their departure upon the ingress of other visitors; when they resign their sway to the power and the predominance of new affections; when, abandoning the heart to solitude, they merely give place to a successor who turns it into as busy a residence of desire and interest and expectation as before—there is nothing in all this to thwart or to overbear any of the laws of our sentient nature—and we see how, in fullest accordance with the mechanism of the heart, a great moral revolution may be made to take place upon it.

This, we trust, will explain the operation of that charm which accompanies the effectual preaching of the gospel. The love of God and the love of the world, are two affections, not merely in a state of rivalship, but in a state of enmity—and that so irreconcilable, that they cannot dwell together in the same bosom. We have already affirmed how impossible it were for the heart, by any innate elasticity of its own, to cast the world away from it; and thus reduce itself to a wilderness. The heart is not so constituted; and the only way to dispossess it of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one. Nothing can exceed the magnitude of the required change in a man's character—when bidden as he is in the New Testament, to love not the world; no, nor any of the things that are in the world—for this so comprehends all that is dear to him in existence, as to be equivalent to a command of self-annihilation. But the same revelation which dictates so mighty an obedience, places within our reach as mighty an instrument of obedience. It brings for admittance to the very door of our heart, an affection which once seated upon its throne, will either subordinate every previous inmate, or bid it away. Beside the world, it places before the eye of the mind Him who made the world and with this peculiarity, which is all its own—that in the Gospel do we so behold God, as that we may love God. It is there, and there only, where God stands revealed as an object of confidence to sinners—and where our desire after Him is not chilled into apathy, by that barrier of human guilt which intercepts every

approach that is not made to Him through the appointed Mediator. It is the bringing in of this better hope, whereby we draw nigh unto God—and to live without hope, is to live without God; and if the heart be without God, the world will then have all the ascendancy. It is God apprehended by the believer as God in Christ, who alone can dispost it from this ascendancy. It is when He stands dismantled of the terrors which belong to Him as an offended lawgiver and when we are enabled by faith, which is His own gift, to see His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and to hear His beseeching voice, as it protests good will to men, and entreats the return of all who will to a full pardon and a gracious acceptance—it is then, that a love paramount to the love of the world, and at length expulsive of it, first arises in the regenerated bosom. It is when released from the spirit of bondage with which love cannot dwell, and when admitted into the number of God's children through the faith that is in Christ Jesus, the spirit of adoption is poured upon us—it is then that the heart, brought under the mastery of one great and predominant affection, is delivered from the tyranny of its former desires, in the only way in which deliverance is possible. And that faith which is revealed to us from heaven, as indispensable to a sinner's justification in the sight of God, is also the instrument of the greatest of all moral and spiritual achievements on a nature dead to the influence, and beyond the reach of every other application.

Thus may we come to perceive what it is that makes the most effective kind of preaching. It

is not enough to hold out to the world's eye the mirror of its own imperfections. It is not enough to come forth with a demonstration, however pathetic, of the evanescent character of all its enjoyments. It is not enough to travel the walk of experience along with you, and speak to your own conscience and your own recollection, of the deceitfulness of the heart, and the deceitfulness of all that the heart is set upon. There is many a bearer of thé Gospel message, who has not shrewdness of natural discernment enough, and who has not power of characteristic description enough, and who has not the talent of moral delineation enough, to present you with a vivid and faithful sketch of the existing follies of society. But that very corruption which he has not the faculty of representing in its visible details, he may practically be the instrument of eradicating in its principle. Let him be but a faithful expounder of the gospel testimony—unable as he may be to apply a descriptive hand to the character of the present world, let him but report with accuracy the matter which revelation has brought to him from a distant world —unskilled as he is in the work of so anatomizing the heart, as with the power of a novelist to create a graphical or impressive exhibition of the worthlessness of its many affections—let him only deal in those mysteries of peculiar doctrine, on which the best of novelists have thrown the wantonness of their derision. He may not be able, with the eye of shrewd and satirical observation, to expose to the ready recognition of his hearers, the desires of worldliness—but with the tidings of the gospel in

commission, he may wield the only engine that can extirpate them. He cannot do what some have done, when, as if by the hand of a magician, they have brought out to view, from the hidden recesses of our nature, the foibles and lurking appetites which belong to it.—But he has a truth in his possession, which into whatever heart it enters, will, like the rod of Aaron, swallow up them all —and unqualified as he may be, to describe the old man in all the nicer shading of his natural and constitutional varieties, with him is deposited that ascendant influence under which the leading tastes and tendencies of the old man are destroyed, and he becomes a new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us not cease then to ply the only instrument of powerful and positive operation, to do away from you the love of the world. Let us try every legitimate method of finding access to your hearts for the love of Him who is greater than the world. For this purpose, let us, if possible, clear away that shroud of unbelief which so hides and darkens the face of the Deity. Let us insist on His claims to your affection—and whether in the shape of gratitude, or in the shape of esteem, let us never cease to affirm, that in the whole of that wondrous economy, the purpose of which is to reclaim a sinful world unto Himself—he, the God of love, so sets Himself forth in characters of endearment, that nought but faith, and nought but understanding, are wanting, on your part, to call forth the love of your hearts back again.

And here let us advert to the incredulity of a

worldly man; when he brings his own sound and secular experience to bear upon the high doctrines of Christianity—when he looks on regeneration as a thing impossible—when feeling as he does, the obstinacies of his own heart on the side of things present, and casting an intelligent eye, much exercised perhaps in the observation of human life, on the equal obstinacies of all who are around him, he pronounces this whole matter about the crucifixion of the old man, and the resurrection of a new man in his place, to be in downright opposition to all that is known and witnessed of the real nature of humanity. We think that we have seen such men, who, firmly trenched in their own vigorous and homebred sagacity, and shrewdly regardful of all that passes before them through the week, and upon the scenes of ordinary business, look on that transition of the heart by which it gradually dies unto time, and awakens in all the life of a new-felt and ever-growing desire towards God, as a mere Sabbath speculation; and who thus, with all their attention engrossed upon the concerns of earthliness, continue unmoved, to the end of their days, amongst the feelings, and the appetites, and the pursuits of earthliness. If the thought of death, and another state of being after it, comes across them at all, it is not with a change so radical as that of being born again, that they ever connect the idea of preparation. They have some vague conception of its being quite enough that they acquit themselves in some decent and tolerable way of their relative obligations; and that, upon the strength of some such social and

domestic moralities as are often realized by him into whose heart the love of God has never entered, they will be transplanted in safety from this world, where God is the Being with whom it may almost be said that they have had nothing to do, to that world where God is the Being with whom they will have mainly and immediately to do throughout all eternity. They admit all that is said of the utter vanity of time, when taken up with as a resting place. But they resist every application made upon the heart of man, with the view of so shifting its tendencies, that it shall not henceforth find in the interests of time, all its rest and all its refreshment. They, in fact, regard such an attempt as an enterprise that is altogether aerial —and with a tone of secular wisdom, caught from the familiarities of every-day experience, do they see a visionary character in all that is said of setting our affections on the things that are above; and of walking by faith; and of keeping our hearts in such a love of God as shall shut out from them the love of the world; and of having no confidence in the flesh; and of so renouncing earthly things as to have our conversation in heaven.

Now, it is altogether worthy of being remarked of those men who thus disrelish spiritual Christianity, and, in fact, deem it an impracticable acquirement, how much of a piece their incredulity about the demands of Christianity, and their incredulity about the doctrines of Christianity, are with one another. No wonder that they feel the work of the New Testament to be beyond their strength, so long as they hold the words of the New Testa-

ment to be beneath their attention. Neither they nor any one else can dispossess the heart of an old affection, but by the expulsive power of a new one—and, if that new affection be the love of God, neither they nor any one else can be made to entertain it, but on such a representation of the Deity, as shall draw the heart of the sinner towards Him. Now it is just their unbelief which screens from the discernment of their minds this representation. They do not see the love of God in sending His Son unto the world. They do not see the expression of His tenderness to men, in sparing Him not, but giving Him up unto the death for us all. They do not see the sufficiency of the atonement, or the sufferings that were endured by Him who bore the burden that sinners should have borne. They do not see the blended holiness and compassion of the Godhead, in that He passed by the transgressions of His creatures, yet could not pass them by without an expiation. It is a mystery to them, how a man should pass to the state of godliness from a state of nature—but had they only a believing view of God manifest in the flesh, this would resolve for them the whole mystery of godliness. As it is, they cannot get quit of their old affections, because they are out of sight from all those truths which have influence to raise a new one. They are like the children of Israel in the land of Egypt, when required to make bricks without straw—they cannot love God, while they want the only food which can aliment this affection in a sinner's bosom—and however great their errors may be both in resisting

the demands of the Gospel as impracticable, and in rejecting the doctrines of the Gospel as inadmissible, yet there is not a spiritual man (and it is the prerogative of him who is spiritual to judge all men) who will not perceive that there is a consistency in these errors.

But if there be a consistency in the errors, in like manner is there a consistency in the truths which are opposite to them. The man who believes in the peculiar doctrines, will readily bow to the peculiar demands of Christianity. When he is told to love God supremely, this may startle another; but it will not startle him to whom God has been revealed in peace, and in pardon, and in all the freeness of an offered reconciliation. When told to shut out the world from his heart, this may be impossible with him who has nothing to replace it—but not impossible with him, who has found in God a sure and a satisfying portion. When told to withdraw his affections from the things that are beneath, this were laying an order of self-extinction upon the man, who knows not another quarter in the whole sphere of his contemplation, to which he could transfer them—but it were not grievous to him whose view has been opened up to the loveliness and glory of the things that are above, and can there find for every feeling of his soul, a most ample and delighted occupation. When told to look not to the things that are seen and temporal, this were blotting out the light of all that is visible from the prospect of him in whose eye there is a wall of partition between guilty nature and the joys of eternity—but he who

believes that Christ hath broken down this wall, finds a gathering radiance upon his soul, as he looks onwards in faith to the things that are unseen and eternal. Tell a man to be holy—and how can he compass such a performance, when his alone fellowship with holiness is a fellowship of despair? It is the atonement of the cross reconciling the holiness of the lawgiver with the safety of the offender, that hath opened the way for a sanctifying influence into the sinner's heart; and he can take a kindred impression from the character of God now brought nigh, and now at peace with him. Separate the demand from the doctrine; and you have either a system of righteousness that is impracticable, or a barren orthodoxy. Bring the demand and the doctrine together—and the true disciple of Christ is able to do the one, through the other strengthening him. The motive is adequate to the movement; and the bidden obedience of the Gospel is not beyond the measure of his strength, just because the doctrine of the Gospel is not beyond the measure of his acceptance. The shield of faith, and the hope of salvation, and the Word of God, and the girdle of truth—these are the armour that he has put on; and with these the battle is won, and the eminence is reached, and the man stands on the vantage ground of a new field, and a new prospect. The effect is great, but the cause is equal to it—and stupendous as this moral resurrection to the precepts of Christianity undoubtedly is, there is an element of strength enough to give it being and continuance in the principles of Christianity.

The object of the Gospel is both to pacify the sinner's conscience, and to purify his heart; and it is of importance to observe, that what mars the one of these objects, mars the other also. The best way of casting out an impure affection is to admit a pure one; and by the love of what is good, to expel the love of what is evil. Thus it is, that the freer the Gospel, the more sanctifying is the Gospel; and the more it is received as a doctrine of grace, the more will it be felt as a doctrine according to godliness. This is one of the secrets of the Christian life, that the more a man holds of God as a pensioner, the greater is the payment of service that he renders back again. On the tenure of "Do this and live," a spirit of fearfulness is sure to enter; and the jealousies of a legal bargain chase away all confidence from the intercourse between God and man; and the creature striving to be square and even with his Creator, is, in fact, pursuing all the while his own selfishness, instead of God's glory; and with all the conformities which he labours to accomplish, the soul of obedience is not there, the mind is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed under such an economy ever can be. It is only when, as in the Gospel, acceptance is bestowed as a present, without money and without price, that the security which man feels in God is placed beyond the reach of disturbance—or, that he can repose in Him, as one friend reposes in another—or, that any liberal and generous understanding can be established betwixt them—the one party rejoicing over the other to do him good—the other finding that the truest gladness of his heart lies in the impulse of a gratitude, by which it is awakened to the charms

of a new moral existence. Salvation by grace—salvation by free grace—salvation not of works, but according to the mercy of God—salvation on such a footing is not more indispensable to the deliverance of our persons from the hand of justice, than it is to the deliverance of our hearts from the chill and the weight of ungodliness. Retain a single shred or fragment of legality with the Gospel, and we raise a topic of distrust between man and God. We take away from the power of the Gospel to melt and to conciliate. For this purpose, the freer it is, the better it is. That very peculiarity which so many dread as the germ of antinomianism, is, in fact, the germ of a new spirit, and a new inclination against it. Along with the light of a free Gospel, does there enter the love of the Gospel, which, in proportion as we impair the freeness, we are sure to chase away. And never does the sinner find within himself so mighty a moral transformation, as when under the belief that he is saved by grace, he feels constrained thereby to offer his heart a devoted thing, and to deny ungodliness.

To do any work in the best manner, we should make use of the fittest tools for it. And we trust, that what has been said may serve in some degree, for the practical guidance of those who would like to reach the great moral achievement of our text—but feel that the tendencies and desires of Nature are too strong for them. We know of no other way by which to keep the love of the world out of our heart, than to keep in our hearts the love of God—and no other way by which to keep our hearts in the love of God, than building ourselves up on our

most holy faith. That denial of the world which is not possible to him that dissents from the Gospel testimony, is possible even as all things are possible, to him that believeth. To try this without faith, is to work without the right tool or the right instrument. But faith worketh by love; and the way of expelling from the heart the love which transgresseth the law, is to admit into its receptacles the love which fulfilleth the law.

Conceive a man to be standing on the margin of this green world; and that, when he looked towards it, he saw abundance smiling upon every field, and all the blessings which earth can afford scattered in profusion throughout every family, and the light of the sun sweetly resting upon all the pleasant habitations, and the joys of human companionship brightening many a happy circle of society—conceive this to be the general character of the scene upon one side of his contemplation; and that on the other, beyond the verge of the goodly planet on which he was situated, he could descry nothing but a dark and fathomless unknown. Think you that he would bid a voluntary adieu to all the brightness and all the beauty that were before him upon earth, and commit himself to the frightful solitude away from it? Would he leave its peopled dwelling places, and become a solitary wanderer through the fields of nonentity? If space offered him nothing but a wilderness, would he for it abandon the homebred scenes of life and of cheerfulness that lay so near, and exerted such a power of urgency to detain him? Would not he cling to the regions of sense, and of life, and of society?—and shrinking

away from the desolation that was beyond it, would not he be glad to keep his firm footing on the territory of this world, and to take shelter under the silver canopy that was stretched over it?

But if, during the time of his contemplation, some happy island of the blest had floated by; and there had burst upon his senses the light of its surpassing glories, and its sounds of sweeter melody; and he clearly saw, that there, a purer beauty rested upon every field, and a more heartfelt joy spread itself among all the families; and he could discern there, a peace, and a piety, and a benevolence, which put a moral gladness into every bosom, and united the whole society in one rejoicing sympathy with each other, and with the beneficent Father of them all. —Could he further see, that pain and mortality were there unknown; and above all, that signals of welcome were hung out, and an avenue of communication was made for him—perceive you not, that what was before the wilderness, would become the land of invitation; and that now the world would be the wilderness? What unpeopled space could not do, can be done by space teeming with beatific scenes, and beatific society. And let the existing tendencies of the heart be what they may to the scene that is near and visibly around us, still if another stood revealed to the prospect of man, either through the channel of faith, or through the channel of his senses —then, without violence done to the constitution of his moral nature, may he die unto the present world, and live to the lovelier world that stands in the distance away from it.

DISCOURSE X.

THE RESTLESSNESS OF HUMAN AMBITION.

"How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?—O that I had the wings of a dove, that I may fly away, and be at rest."—PSALM xi. 1. and lv. 6.

To all those who are conversant in the scenery of external nature, it is evident, that an object to be seen to the greatest advantage must be placed at a certain distance from the eye of the observer. The poor man's hut, though all within be raggedness and disorder, and all around it be full of the most nauseous and disgusting spectacles—yet, if seen at a sufficient distance, may appear a sweet and interesting cottage. That field where the thistle grows, and the face of which is deformed by the wild exuberance of a rank and pernicious vegetation, may delight the eye of a distant spectator by the loveliness of its verdure. That lake, whose waters are corrupted, and whose banks poison the air by their marshy and putrid exhalations, may charm the eye of an enthusiast, who views it from an adjoining eminence, and dwells with rapture on the quietness of its surface, and on the beauty of its outline—its sweet border fringed with the gayest colouring of Nature, and on which spring lavishes its finest ornaments. All is the effect of distance. It softens the harsh and disgusting features of every object. What is gross and ordinary, it can dress in the most

romantic attractions. The country hamlet it can transform into a paradise of beauty, in spite of the abominations that are at every door, and the angry brawlings of the men and the women who occupy it. All that is loathsome or offensive, is softened down by the power of distance. We see the smoke rising in fantastic wreaths through the pure air, and the village spire peeping from among the thick verdure of the trees which embosom it. The fancy of our sentimentalist swells with pleasure, and peace and piety supply their delightful associations to complete the harmony of the picture.

This principle may serve to explain a feeling which some of us may have experienced. On a fine day, when the sun threw its unclouded splendours over a whole neighbourhood, did we never form a wish that our place could be transferred to some distant and more beautiful part of the landscape? Did the idea never rise in our fancy, that the people who sport on yon sunny bank are happier than ourselves—that we should like to be buried in that distant grove, and forget, for a while, in silence and in solitude, the distractions of the world—that we should like to repose by yon beautiful rivulet, and soothe every anxiety of our heart by the gentleness of its murmurs—that we should like to transport ourselves to the distance of miles, and there enjoy the peace which resides in some sweet and sheltered concealment? In a word, was there no secret aspiration of the soul for another place than what we actually occupied? Instead of resting in the quiet enjoyment of our

present situation, did not our wishes wander abroad and around us—and were not we ready to exclaim with the Psalmist in the text, "O that I had the wings of a dove; for I would fly to yonder mountain, and be at rest?"

But what is of most importance to be observed is, that even when we have reached the mountain, rest is as far from us as ever. As we get nearer the wished-for spot, the fairy enchantments in which distance had arrayed it, gradually disappear; when we at last arrive at our object, the illusion is entirely dissipated; and we are grieved to find, that we have carried the same principle of restlessness and discontent along with us.

Now, what is true of a natural landscape, is also true of that *moral landscape*, which is presented to the eye of the mind when it contemplates human life, and casts a wide survey over the face of human society. The position which I myself occupy is seen and felt with all its disadvantages. Its vexations come home to my feelings with all the certainty of experience. I see it before mine eyes with a vision so near and intimate, as to admit of no colouring, and to preclude the exercise of fancy. It is only in those situations which are without me, where the principle of deception operates, and where the vacancies of an imperfect experience are filled up by the power of imagination, ever ready to summon the fairest forms of pure and unmingled enjoyment. It is all resolvable, as before, into the principle of distance. I am too far removed to see the smaller features of the object which I contemplate. I overlook the operation of

those minuter causes, which expose every situation of human life to the inroads of misery and disappointment. Mine eye can only take in the broader outlines of the object before me; and it consigns to fancy the task of filling them up with its finest colouring.

Am I unlearned? I feel the disgrace of ignorance, and sigh for the name and the distinctions of philosophy. Do I stand upon a literary eminence? I feel the vexations of rivalship, and could almost renounce the splendours of my dear-bought reputation for the peace and shelter which insignificance bestows. Am I poor? I riot in fancy upon the gratifications of luxury; and think how great I would be, if invested with all the consequence of wealth and of patronage. Am I rich? I sicken at the deceitful splendour which surrounds me; and am at times tempted to think, that I would have been happier far if born to a humbler station, I had been trained to the peace and innocence of poverty. Am I immersed in business? I repine at the fatigues of employment; and envy the lot of those who have every hour at their disposal, and can spend all their time in the sweet relaxations of amusement and society. Am I exempted from the necessity of exertion? I feel the corroding anxieties of indolence, and attempt in vain to escape that weariness and disgust which useful and regular occupation can alone save me from. Am I single? I feel the dreariness of solitude, and my fancy warms at the conception of a dear and domestic circle. Am I embroiled in the cares of a family? I am tormented with the perverseness or ingratitude

of those around me; and sigh in all the bitterness of repentance, over the rash and irrecoverable step by which I have renounced for ever the charms of independence.

This, in fact, is the grand principle of human ambition; and it serves to explain both its restlessness and its vanity. What is present is seen in all its minuteness; and we overlook not a single article in the train of little drawbacks, and difficulties, and disappointments. What is distant is seen under a broad and general aspect; and the illusions of fancy are substituted in those places which we cannot fill up with the details of actual observation. What is present fills me with disgust. What is distant allures me to enterprise. I sigh for an office, the business of which is more congenial to my temper. I fix mine eye on some lofty eminence in the scale of preferment. I spurn at the condition which I now occupy, and I look around me and above me. The perpetual tendency is not to enjoy our actual position, but to get away from it—and not an individual amongst us who does not every day of his life join in the aspiration of the Psalmist, "O that I had the wings of a dove, that I may fly to yonder mountain, and be at rest."

But the truth is, that we never rest. The most regular and stationary being on the face of the earth, has something to look forward to, and something to aspire after. He must realize that sum to which he annexes the idea of a competency. He must add that piece of ground which he thinks necessary to complete the domain of which he is

the proprietor. He must secure that office which confers so much honour and emolument upon the holder. Even after every effort of personal ambition is exhausted, he has friends and children to provide for. The care of those who are to come after him, lands him in a never-ending train of hopes, and wishes, and anxieties. O that I could gain the vote and the patronage of this honourable acquaintance—or, that I could secure the political influence of that great man who honours me with an occasional call, and addressed me the other day with a cordiality which was quite bewitching—or that my young friend could succeed in his competition for the lucrative vacancy to which I have been looking forward, for years, with all the eagerness which distance and uncertainty could inspire—or that we could fix the purposes of that capricious and unaccountable wanderer, who, of late indeed has been very particular in his attentions, and whose connexion we acknowledge, in secret, would be an honour and an advantage to our family—or, at all events, let me heap wealth and aggrandizement on that son, who is to be the representative of my name, and is to perpetuate that dynasty which I have had the glory of establishing.

This restless ambition is not peculiar to any one class of society. A court only offers to one's notice a more exalted theatre for the play of rivalship and political enterprise. In the bosom of a cottage, we may witness the operation of the very same principle, only directed to objects of greater insignificance—and though a place for my girl, or an apprenticeship for my boy, be all that

I aspire after, yet an enlightened observer of the human character will perceive in it the same eagerness of competition, the same jealousy, the same malicious attempts to undermine the success of a more likely pretender, the same busy train of passions and anxieties which animate the exertions of him who struggles for precedency in the cabinet, and lifts his ambitious eye to the management of an empire.

This is the universal property of our nature. In the whole circle of our experience, did we ever see a man sit down to the full enjoyment of the present, without a hope or a wish unsatisfied? Did he carry in his mind no reference to futurity —no longing of the soul after some remote or inaccessible object—no day-dream which played its enchantments around him, and which even when accomplished, left him nothing more than the delirium of a momentary triumph? Did we never see him, after the bright illusions of novelty were over—when the present object had lost its charm, and the distant begun to practise its allurements—when some gay vision of futurity had hurried him on to a new enterprise, and in the fatigues of a restless ambition, he felt a bosom as oppressed with care, and a heart as anxious and dissatisfied as ever?

This is the true, though the curious, and we had almost said, the farcical picture of human life. Look into the heart which is the seat of feeling, and we there perceive a perpetual tendency to enjoyment, but not enjoyment itself—the cheerfulness of hope, but not the happiness of actual possession. The present is but an instant of time.

The moment that we call it our own, it abandons us. It is not the actual sensation which occupies the mind. It is what is to come next. Man lives in futurity. The pleasurable feeling of the moment forms almost no part of his happiness. It is not the reality of to-day which interests his heart. It is the vision of to-morrow. It is the distant object on which fancy has thrown its deceitful splendour. When to-morrow comes, the animating hope is transformed into the dull and insipid reality. As the distant object draws near, it becomes cold and tasteless, and uninteresting. The only way in which the mind can support itself, is by recurring to some new anticipation. This may give buoyancy for a time—but it will share the fate of all its predecessors, and be the addition of another folly to the wretched train of disappointments that have gone before it.

What a curious object of contemplation to a superior being, who casts an eye over this lower world, and surveys the busy restless and unceasing operations of the people who swarm upon its surface. Let him select any one individual amongst us, and confine his attention to him as a specimen of the whole. Let him pursue him through the intricate variety of his movements, for he is never stationary; see him with his eye fixed upon some distant object, and struggling to arrive at it; see him pressing forward to some eminence which perpetually recedes away from him; see the inexplicable being, as he runs in full pursuit of some glittering bauble, and on the moment he reaches it, throws it behind him, and it is forgotten; see

him unmindful of his past experience, and hurrying his footsteps to some new object with the same eagerness and rapidity as ever; compare the ecstasy of hope with the lifelessness of possession, and observe the whole history of his day to be made up of one fatiguing race of vanity, and restlessness, and disappointment;

> "And, like the glittering of an idiot's toy,
> Doth fancy mock his vows."

To complete the unaccountable history, let us look to its termination. Man is irregular in his movements, but this does not hinder the regularity of Nature. Time will not stand still to look at us. It moves at its own invariable pace. The winged moments fly in swift succession over us. The great luminaries which are suspended on high, perform their cycles in the heaven. The sun describes his circuit in the firmament, and the space of a few revolutions will bring every man among us to his destiny. The decree passes abroad against the poor child of infatuation. It meets him in the full career of hope and of enterprise. He sees the dark curtain of mortality falling upon the world, and upon all its interests. That busy, restless heart, so crowded with its plans, and feelings, and anticipations forgets to play, and all its fluttering anxieties are hushed for ever.

Where then is that resting place which the Psalmist aspired after? What are we to mean by that mountain, that wilderness, to which he prayed that the wings of a dove may convey him, afar from the noise and distractions of the world,

and hasten his escape from the windy storm, and the tempest? Is there no object, in the whole round of human enjoyment, which can give rest to the agitated spirit of man—where he might sit down in the fulness of contentment, after he has reached it, and bid a final adieu to the cares and fatigues of ambition? Is this longing of the mind a principle of his nature, which no gratification can extinguish? Must it condemn him to perpetual agitation, and to the wild impulses of an ambition which is never satisfied?

We allow that exercise is the health of the mind. It is better to engage in a trifling pursuit, if innocent, than to watch the melancholy progress of time, and drag out a weary existence in all the languor of a consuming indolence. But nobody will deny that it is better still, if the pursuit in which we are engaged be not a trifling one—if it conduct to some lasting gratification—if it lead to some object, the possession of which confers more happiness than the mere prospect—if the mere pleasure of the chase is not the only recompense—but where, in addition to this, we secure some reward proportioned to the fatigue of the exercise, and that justifies the eagerness with which we embarked in it. So long as the exercise is innocent, better do something than be idle: but better still, when the something we do, leads to a valuable and important termination. Any thing rather than the ignoble condition of that mind which feels the burden of itself—and which knows not how to dispose of the weary hours that hang so oppressively upon it. But there is certainly a ground of

preference in the objects which invite us to exertion —and better far to fix upon that object which leaves happiness and satisfaction behind it, than dissipate our vigour in a pursuit which terminates in nothing —and where the mere pleasure of occupation is the only circumstance to recommend it. When we talk of the vanity of ambition, we do not propose to extinguish the principles of our nature, but to give them a more useful and exalted direction. A state of hope and of activity is the element of man —and all that we propose, is to withdraw his hope from the deceitful objects of fancy, and to engage his activity in the pursuit of real and permanent enjoyments.

Man must have an object to look forward to. Without this incitement the mind languishes. It is thrown out of its element; and, in this unnatural suspension of its powers, it feels a dreariness and a discomfort far more unsufferable, than it ever experienced from the visitations of a real or positive calamity. If such an object do not offer, he will create one for himself. The mere possession of wealth, and of all its enjoyments, will not satisfy him. Possession carries along with it the dulness of certainty; and to escape from this dulness, he will transform it into an uncertainty—he will embark it in a hazardous speculation, or he will stake it at the gaming-table; and from no other principle than that he may exchange the listlessness of possession, for the animating sensations of hope and of enterprise. It is a paradox in the moral constitution of man; but the experience of every day confirms it—that man follows what he knows

to be a delusion, with as much eagerness, as if he were assured of its reality. Put the question to him, and he will tell us, that if we were to lay before him all the profits which his fancy anticipates, he would long as much as ever for some new speculation; or, in other words, be as much dissatisfied as ever with the position which he actually occupies—and yet, with his eye perfectly open to this circumstance, will he embark every power of his mind in the chase of what he knows to be a mockery and a phantom.

Now, to find fault with man for the pleasure which he derives from the mere excitement of a distant object, would be to find fault with the constitution of his nature. It is not the general principle of his activity which we condemn. It is the direction of that activity to a useless and unprofitable object. The mere happiness of the pursuit does not supersede the choice of the object. Even though we were to keep religion out of sight altogether, and bring the conduct of man to the test of worldly principles, we still presuppose a ground of preference in the object. Why is the part of the sober and industrious tradesman preferred to that of the dissipated gambler? Both feel the delights of a mind fully occupied with something to excite and to animate. But the exertions of the one lead to the safe enjoyment of a competency. The exertions of the other lead to an object which, at best, is precarious, and often land us in the horrors of poverty and disgrace. The mere pleasure of exertion is not enough to justify every kind of it: we must look forward to the ob-

ject and the termination—and it is the judicious choice of the object which, even in the estimation of worldly wisdom, forms the great point of distinction betwixt prudence and folly. Now, all that we ask of you, is to extend the application of the same principle to a life of religion. Compare the wisdom of the children of light, with the wisdom of a blind and worldly generation—the prudence of the Christian who labours for immortality, with the prudence of him who labours for the objects of a vain and perishable ambition. Contrast the littleness of time, with the greatness of eternity—the restless and unsatisfying pleasures of the world, with the enjoyments of heaven so pure, so substantial, so unfading—and tell us which plays the higher game—he, all whose anxiety is frittered away on the pursuits of a scene that is ever shifting, and ever transitory; or he, who contemplates the life of man in all its magnitude; who acts upon the wide and comprehensive survey of its interests, and takes into his estimate the mighty roll of innumerable ages.

There is no resting-place to be found on this side of death. It is the doctrine of the Bible, and all experience loudly proclaims it. We do not ask you to listen to the complaints of the poor, or the murmurs of the disappointed. Take your lesson from the veriest favourite of fortune. See him placed in a prouder eminence than he ever aspired after. See him arrayed in brighter colours than ever dazzled his early imagination. See him surrounded with all the homage that fame and flattery can bestow—and after you have

suffered this parading exterior to practise its deceitfulness upon you, enter into his solitude—mark his busy, restless, dissatisfied eye, as it wanders uncertain on every object—enter into his mind, and tell me if repose or enjoyment be there—see him the poor victim of chagrin and disquietude—mark his heart as it nauseates the splendour which encompasses him—and tell us, if you have not learned in the truest and most affecting characters, that even in the full tide of a triumphant ambition, "man labours for the meat which perisheth, and for the food which satisfieth not."

What meaneth this restlessness of our nature? What meaneth this unceasing activity which longs for exercise and employment, even after every object is gained, which first roused it to enterprise? What mean those unmeasurable longings, which no gratification can extinguish, and which still continue to agitate the heart of man, even in the fulness of plenty and of enjoyment. If they mean any thing at all, they mean, that all which this world can offer, is not enough to fill up his capacity for happiness—that time is too small for him, and he is born for something beyond it—that the scene of his earthly existence is too limited, and he is formed to expatiate in a wider and a grander theatre—that a nobler destiny is reserved for him—and that to accomplish the purpose of his being, he must soar above the littleness of the world, and aim at a loftier prize.

It forms the peculiar honour and excellence of religion, that it accommodates to this property of our nature—that it holds out a prize suited to our

high calling—that there is a grandeur in its objects, which can fill and surpass the imagination—that it dignifies the present scene by connecting it with eternity—that it reveals to the eye of faith the glories of an unperishable world—and how, from the high eminencies of heaven, a cloud of witnesses are looking down upon earth, not as a scene for the petty anxieties of time, but as a splendid theatre for the ambition of immortal spirits.

DISCOURSE XI.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE TO THE LOWER ORDERS OF SOCIETY.

"Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished."—ECCLESIASTES iv. 13.

THERE is no one topic on which the Bible, throughout the variety of its separate compositions, maintains a more lucid and entire consistency of sentiment, than the superiority of moral over all physical and all external distinctions. This lesson is frequently urged in the Old Testament, and as frequently reiterated in the New. There is a predominance given in both to worth, and to wisdom, and to principle, which leads us to understand, that within the compass of human attainment, there is an object placed before us of a higher and more estimable character than all the objects of a common-place ambition—that wherever there is mind, there stands associated with it a nobler and more abiding interest than all the aggrandizements which wealth or rank can bestow—that within the limits of the moral and intellectual department of our nature, there is a commodity which money cannot purchase, and possesses a more sterling excellence than all which money can command. This preference of man viewed in his essential attributes, to man viewed according to the variable accessaries by

which he is surrounded—this preference of the subject to all its outward and contingent modifications—this preference of man viewed as the possessor of a heart, and of a spirit, and of capacities for truth and for righteousness, to man signalized by prosperity, and clothed in the pomp and in the circumstance of its visible glories—this is quite akin with the superiority which the Bible every where ascribes to the soul over the body, and to eternity over time, and to the Supreme Author of Being over all that is subordinate and created. It marks a discernment, unclouded by all those associations which are so current and have so fatal an ascendancy in our world—the wisdom of a purer and more ethereal region than the one we occupy—the unpolluted clearness of a light shining in a dark place, which announces its own coming to be from above, and gives every spiritual reader of the Bible to perceive the beaming of a powerful and presiding intelligence in all its pages.

One very animating inference to be drawn from our text, is how much may be made of humanity. Did a king come to take up his residence amongst us—did he shed a grandeur over our city by the presence of his court, and give the impulse of his expenditure to the trade of its population—it were not easy to rate the value and the magnitude which such an event would have on the estimation of a common understanding, or the degree of personal importance which would attach to him, who stood a lofty object in the eye of admiring townsmen. And yet it is possible, out of the raw and ragged

materials of an obscurest lane, to rear an individual of more inherent worth, than him who thus draws the gaze of the world upon his person. By the act of training in wisdom's ways the most tattered and neglected boy who runs upon our pavements, do we present the community with that which, in wisdom's estimation, is of greater price, than this gorgeous inhabitant of a palace. And when one thinks how such a process may be multiplied among the crowded families that are around us—when one thinks of the extent and the density of that mine of moral wealth, which retires, and deepens, and accumulates, behind each front of the street along which we are passing—when one tries to compute the quantity of spirit that is imbedded in the depth and the frequency of these human habitations, and reflects of this native ore, that more than the worth of a monarch may be stamped, by instruction, on each separate portion of it—a field is thus opened for the patriotism of those who want to give an augmented value to the produce of our land, which throws into insignificance all the enterprises of vulgar speculation. Commerce may flourish, or may fail—and amid the ruin of her many fluctuations, may elevate a few of the more fortunate of her sons to the affluence of princes. Thy merchants may be princes, and thy traffickers be the honourable of the earth. But if there be truth in our text, there may, on the very basis of human society, and by a silent process of education, materials be formed, which far outweigh in cost and true dignity, all the blazing pinnacles that glitter upon its summit—and it is indeed a cheer-

ing thought to the heart of a philanthropist, that near him lies a territory so ample, on which he may expatiate—where for all his pains, and all his sacrifices, he is sure of a repayment more substantial, than was ever wafted by richly laden flotilla to our shores—where the return comes to him, not in that which superficially decks the man, but in a solid increment of value fixed and perpetuated on the man himself—where additions to the worth of the soul form the proceeds of his productive operation—and where, when he reckons up the profits of his enterprise, he finds them to consist of that, which, on the highest of all authorities, he is assured to be more than meat, of that which is greatly more than raiment.

Even without looking beyond the confines of our present world, the virtue of humble life will bear to be advantageously contrasted with all the pride and glory of an elevated condition. The man who, though among the poorest of them all, has a wisdom and a weight of character, which makes him the oracle of his neighbourhood—the man, who, vested with no other authority than the meek authority of worth, carries in his presence a power to shame and to overawe the profligacy that is around him—the venerable father, from whose lowly tenement the voice of psalms is heard to ascend with the offering up of every evening sacrifice—the Christian sage, who, exercised among life's severest hardships, looks calmly onward to heaven, and trains the footsteps of his children in the way that leads to it—the eldest of a well-ordered family, bearing their duteous and honourable part in the contest with its

difficulties and its trials—all these offer to our notice such elements of moral respectability, as do exist among the lowest orders of human society, and elements, too, which admit of being multiplied far beyond the reach of any present calculation. And while we hold nothing to be more unscriptural than the spirit of a factious discontent with the rulers of our land—while we feel nothing to be more untasteful than the insolence of a vulgar disdain towards men of rank, or men of opulence—yet should the king upon the throne be taught to understand, that there is a dignity of an intrinsically higher order than the dignity of birth or of power—a dignity which may be seen to sit with gracefulness on the meanest of his subjects—and which draws from the heart of the beholder a truer and profounder reverence.

So that, were it for nothing more than to bless and adorn our present state, there cannot be an attempt of greater promise, than that of extending education among the throng of our peasantry—there cannot be a likelier way of filling the country with beauteous and exalted spectacles—there cannot be a readier method of pouring a glory over the face of our land, than that of spreading the wisdom of life, and the wisdom of principle, throughout the people who live in it—a glory differing in kind, but greatly higher in degree, than the glories of common prosperity. It is well that the progress of knowledge is now looked to by politicians without alarm—that the ignorance of the poor is no longer regarded as more essential to the devotion of their patriotism, than it is to the devotion of their piety—that they have, at length, found that the best

way of disarming the lower orders of all that is threatening and tumultuous, is not to enthral, but to enlighten them—that the progress of truth among them, instead of being viewed with dismay, is viewed with high anticipation—and an impression greatly more just, and greatly more generous, is now beginning to prevail, that the strongest rampart which can possibly be thrown around the cause of public tranquillity, consists of a people raised by information, and graced by all moral and all Christian accomplishments.

For our own part, we trust, that the mighty interval of separation between the higher and lower orders of our community, will, at length, be broken down, not by any inroad of popular violence—not by the fierce and devouring sweep of any revolutionary tempest—not even by any new adjustment, either of the limits of power, or the limits of property—not, in short, as the result of any battle, fought either on the arena of war, or on the arena of politics—but as the fruit of that gradual equalization in mind and in manners, to which even now a sensible approach is already making on the part of our artizans and our labourers. They are drawing towards an equality, and on that field, too, in which equality is greatly most honourable. And we fondly hope, that the time is coming, when, in frank and frequent intercourse, we shall behold the ready exchange of confidence on the one side, and affection on the other—when the rich and the poor shall love each other more, just because they know each other more—when each party shall recognise the other to be vastly worthier of regard and of reverence

than is now apprehended—when united by the sympathies of a common hope, and a common nature, and on a perfect level in all that is essential and eharacteristic of humanity, they shall, at length, learn to live in love and peacefulness together, as the expectants of one common heaven—as the members of one common and rejoieing family.

But, to attain a just estimate of the superiority of the poor man who has wisdom, over the rich man who has it not, we must enter into the calculation of eternity—we must look to wisdom in its true essenee, as eonsisting of religion, as having the fear of God for its beginning, and the rule of God for its way, and the favour of God for its full and satisfying termination—we must eompute how speedily it is, that, on the wings of time, the season of every paltry distinetion between them must, at length, pass away; how soon death will strip the one of his rags, and the other of his pageantry, and send them, in utter nakedness, to the dust; how soon judgment will summon them from their graves, and plaee them in outward equality before the great disposer of their future lot, and their future plaee, through ages whieh never end; how in that situation, the accidental distinetions of life will be rendered void, and personal distinetions will be all that shall avail them; how, when examined by the secrets of the inner man, and the deeds done in their body, the treasure of heaven shall be adjudged only to him whose heart was set upon it in this world; and how tremendously the account between them will be turned, when it shall be found of the one, that he must perish for lack of knowledge, and of

the other, that he has the wisdom which is unto salvation.

And here it is of importance to remark, that to be wise as a Christian is wise, it is not essential to have that higher scholarship which wealth alone can purchase—that such is the peculiar adaptation of the Gospel to the poor, that it may be felt in the full force of its most powerful evidence, by the simplest of its hearers—that to be convinced of its truth, all which appears necessary is, to have a perception of sin through the medium of the conscience, and a perception of the suitableness of the offered Saviour through the medium of a revelation, plain in its terms, and obviously sincere and affectionate in its calls. Philosophy does not melt the conscience. Philosophy does not make luminous that which in itself is plain. Philosophy does not bring home, with greater impression upon the heart, the symptoms of honesty and good will, which abound in the New Testament. Prayer may do it. Moral earnestness may do it. The Spirit, given to those who ask Him, may shine with the light of His demonstration, on the docility of those little children, who are seeking, with their whole hearts, the way of peace, and long to have their feet established on the paths of righteousness. There is a learning, the sole fruit of which is a laborious deviation from the truth as it is in Jesus. And there is a learning which reaches no farther than to the words in which that truth is announced, and yet reaches far enough to have that truth brought home with power upon the understanding—a learning, the sole achievement of which is to read

the Bible, and yet by which the scholar is conducted to that hidden wisdom, which is his light in life, and his passport to immortality—a learning, which hath simply led the inquirer's way to that place, where the Holy Ghost hath descended upon him in rich effusion, and which, as he was reading, in his own tongue, the wonderful words of God, hath given them such a weight and such a clearness in his eyes, that they have become to him the words whereby he shall be saved. And thus it is, that in many a cottage of our land, there is a wisdom which is reviled, or unknown, in many of our halls of literature—there is the candle of the Lord shining in the hearts of those who fear Him—there is a secret revealed unto babes, which is hidden from the wise and the prudent—there is an eye which discerns, and a mind that is well exercised on the mysteries of the sure and the well-ordered covenant —there is a sense and a feeling of the preciousness of that cross, the doctrine of which is foolishness to those who perish—there is a ready apprehension of that truth, which is held at nought by many rich, and many mighty, and many noble, who will not be admonished—but which makes these poor to be rich in faith, and heirs of that kingdom which God hath prepared for those who love Him.

We know not, if any who is now present, has ever felt the charm of an act of intercourse with a Christian among the poor—with one, whose chief attainment is, that he knows the Bible to be true —and that his heart, touched and visited by a consenting movement to its doctrine, feels it to be precious. We shall be disappointed, if the very

exterior of such a man do not bear the impress of that worth and dignity which have been stamped upon his character—if, in the very aspect and economy of his household, the traces of his superiority are not to be found—if the promise, even of the life that now is, be not conspicuously realized on the decent sufficiency of his means, and the order of his well-conditioned family—if the eye of tasteful benevolence be not regaled by the symptoms of comfort and cheerfulness which are to be seen in his lowly habitation. And we shall be greatly disappointed, if after having survived the scoff of companions, and run through the ordeal of nature's enmity, he do not earn, as the fruits of the good confession that he witnesses among his neighbours, the tribute of a warm and willing cordiality from them all—if, while he lives, he do not stand the first in estimation, and when he dies, the tears and acknowledgments of acquaintances, as well as of kinsfolk, do not follow him to his grave —if, even in the hearts of the most unholy around him, an unconscious testimony is not borne to the worth of holiness, so as to make even this world's honour one of the ingredients in the portion of the righteous. But these are the mere tokens and visible accompaniments of Christian excellence— the passing efflorescence of a growth that is opening and maturing for eternity. To behold this excellence in all its depth, and in all its solidity, you must examine his mind, and there see the vastly higher elements, with which it is conversant, than those among which the children of this world are grovelling—there see, how, in the hidden walk of

the inner man, he treads a more elevated path than is trodden either by the daughters of gaiety, or the sons of ambition—there see, how the whole greatness and imagery of heaven are present to his thoughts, and what a reach and nobleness of conception have gathered upon his soul, by his daily approaches to heaven's sanctuary. He lives in a cottage—and yet he is a king and priest unto God. He is fixed for life to the ignoble drudgery of a workman, and yet he is on the full march to a blissful immortality. He is a child in the mysteries of science, but familiar with greater mysteries. That preaching of the cross, which is foolishness to others, he feels to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God. That faithfulness which annexes to all the promises of the Gospel —that righteousness which is unto the believer—that fulness in Christ, out of which the supplies of light and of strength are ever made to descend on the prayers of all who put their trust in Him—that wisdom of principle, and wisdom of application, by which, through his spiritual insight into his Bible, he is enabled both to keep his heart, and to guide the movements of his history,—these are his treasures—these are the elements of that moral wealth, by which he is far exalted above the monarch, who stalks his little hour of magnificence on earth, and then descends a ghost of departed greatness into the land of condemnation. He is rich, just because the word of Christ dwells in him richly in all wisdom. He is great, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon him.

So that, the same conclusion comes back upon

us with mightier emphasis than before. If a poor child be capable of being thus transformed, how it should move the heart of a city philanthropist, when he thinks of the amazing extent of raw material, for this moral and spiritual manufacture that is on every side of him—when he thinks, that in going forth on some Christian enterprise among a population, he is in truth, walking among the rudiments of a state that is to be everlasting—that out of their most loathsome and unseemly abodes, a glory can be extracted, which will weather all the storms, and all the vicissitudes of this world's history—that, in the filth and raggedness of a hovel, that is to be found, on which all the worth of heaven, as well as all the endurance of heaven can be imprinted—that he is, in a word, dealing in embryo with the elements of a great and future empire, which is to rise, indestructible and eternal, on the ruins of all that is earthly, and every member of which shall be a king and a priest for evermore.

And before I pass on to the application of these remarks, let me just state, that the great instrument for thus elevating the poor, is that Gospel of Jesus Christ, which may be preached unto the poor. It is the doctrine of His cross finding an easier admission into their hearts, than it does through those barriers of human pride, and human resistance, which are often reared on the basis of literature. Let the testimony of God be simply taken in, that on His own Son he has laid the iniquities of us al—and from this point does the humble scholar of Christianity pass into light, and enlargement, and progressive holiness. On the reception of this

great truth, there hinges the emancipation of his heart from a thraldom which represses all the spiritual energies of those who live without hope, and, therefore, live without God in the world. It is guilt—it is the sense of his awakened and unexpiated guilt, which keeps man at so wide a distance from the God whom he has offended. Could some method be devised, by which God, jealous of His honour, and man jealous of his safety, might be brought together on a firm ground of reconciliation—it would translate the sinner under a new moral influence, to the power of which, and the charm of which, He, before, was utterly impracticable. Jesus Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God. This is a truth, which, when all the world shall receive it, all the world will be renovated. Many do not see how a principle, so mighty in operation, should be enveloped in a proposition so simple of utterance. But let a man, by his faith in this utterance, come to know that God is his friend, and that heaven is the home of his fondest expectation; and in contact with such new elements as these, he will evince the reach, and the habit, and the desire of a new creature. It is this doctrine which is the alone instrument of God for the moral transformation of our species. When every demonstration from the chair of philosophy shall fail, this will achieve its miracles of light and virtue among the people—and however infidelity may now deride—or profaneness may now lift her appalling voice upon our streets—or licentiousness may now offer her sickening spectacles—or moral worthlessness may have

now deeply tainted the families of our outcast and long-neglected population,—however unequal may appear the contest with the powers and the principles of darkness—yet let not the teachers of righteousness abandon it in despair; God will bring forth judgment unto victory, and on the triumphs of the word of his own testimony, will he usher in the glory of the latter days.

There is one kind of institution that never has been set up in a country, without deceiving and degrading its people; and another kind of institution that never has been set up in a country, without raising both the comfort and the character of its families. We leave it to the policy of our sister kingdom, by the pomp and the pretension of her charities, to disguise the wretchedness which she cannot do away. The glory of Scotland lies in her schools. Out of the abundance of her moral and literary wealth, that wealth which communication cannot dissipate—that wealth which its possessor may spread and multiply among thousands, and yet be as affluent as ever—that wealth, which grows by competition, instead of being exhausted—this is what, we trust, she will be ever ready to bestow on all her people. Silver and gold she may have none—but such as she has she will give—she will send them to school. She cannot make pensioners of them—but will, if they like, make scholars of them. She will give them of that food by which she nurses and sustains all her offspring—by which she renders wise the very poorest of her children—by which, if there be truth in our text, she puts into many a single cottager, a glory surpassing that

of the mightiest potentates in our world. To hold out any other boon, is to hold out a promise which she and no country in the universe, can ever realize —it is to decoy, and then most wretchedly to deceive—it is to put on a front of invitation, by which numbers are allured to hunger, and nakedness, and contempt. It is to spread a table, and to hang out such signals of hospitality, as draw around it a multitude expecting to be fed, and who find that they must famish over a scanty entertainment. A system replete with practical mischief, can put on the semblance of charity, even as Satan, the father of all lying and deceitful promises, can put on the semblance of an angel of light. But we trust, that the country in which we live will ever be preserved from the cruelty of its tender mercies—that she will keep by her schools, and her Scriptures, and her moralizing process; and that, instead of vainly attempting so to force the exuberance of Nature, as to meet and satisfy the demands of a population, whom she has led astray, she will make it her constant aim so to exalt her population, as to establish every interest that belongs to them, on the foundation of their own worth and their own capabilities—that taunted, as she has been, by her contemptuous neighbour, for the poverty of her soil, she will at least prove, by deed and by example, that it is fitted to sustain an erect, and honourable, and high-minded peasantry; and leaving England to enjoy the fatness of her own fields, and a complacency with her own institutions, that we shall make a clean escape from her error, and never again be entangled therein—that unse-

duced by the false lights of a mistaken philanthropy, and mistaken patriotism, we shall be enabled to hold on in the way of our ancestors; to ward off every near and threatening blight from the character of our beloved people; and so to labour with the manhood of the present, and the boyhood of the coming generation, as to enrich our land with that wisdom which is more precious than gold, and that righteousness which exalteth a kingdom.

DISCOURSE XII.

ON THE DUTY AND THE MEANS OF CHRISTIANIZING OUR HOME POPULATION.

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."—MARK xvi. 15.

CHRISTIANITY proceeds upon the native indisposition of the human heart to its truths and its lessons—and all its attempts for the establishment of itself in the world are made upon this principle. It never expects that men will, of their own accord, originate that movement by which they are to come in contact with the faith of the Gospel—and, therefore, instead of waiting till they shall move towards the Gospel, it has been provided, from the first, that the Gospel shall move towards them. The Apostles did not set up their stationary college at Jerusalem, in the hope of embassies from a distance to inquire after the recent and wondrous revelation that had broke upon the world. But they had to go forth, and to preach among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And, in like manner, it never was looked for, that men, in the ardour of their curiosity, or desire after the way of salvation, were to learn the language of the Apostles, that they might come and hear of it at their mouth. But the Apostles were miraculously gifted with the power of addressing all in their own native language—and when thus furnished, they went actively and aggressively about among them. It is no where

supposed that the demand for Christianity is spontaneously, and in the first instance, to arise among those who are not Christians; but it is laid upon those who are Christians, to go abroad, and, if possible, to awaken out of their spiritual lethargy, those who are fast asleep in that worldliness, which they love, and from which, without some external application, there is no rational prospect of ever arousing them. The dead mass will not quicken into sensibility of itself—and, therefore, unless some cause of fermentation be brought to it from without, will it remain in all the sluggishness of its original nature. For there is an utter diversity between the article of Christian instruction, and the articles of ordinary merchandise. For the latter there is a demand, to which men are natively and originally urged by hunger or by thirst, or by the other physical sensations and appetites of their constitution. For the former there is no natural appetite. It is just as necessary to create a spiritual hunger, as it is to afford a spiritual refreshment—and so from the very first, do we find, that for the spread of Christianity in the world, there had to be not an itinerancy on the part of inquirers, but a busy, active, and extended itinerancy on the part of its advocates and its friends.

Now, those very principles which were so obviously acted on at the beginning, are also the very principles that, in all ages of the church, have characterized its evangelizing processes. The Bible Society is now doing, by ordinary means, what was done by the miracle of tongues, in the days of the Apostles—enabling the people of all

nations to read each in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God. And the Missionary Societies are sending forth, not inspired Apostles, gifted with tongues; but the expounders of apostolical doctrine, learned in tongues, over the face of the globe. They do not presume upon such a taste for the gospel in heathen lands, as that the people there shall traverse seas and continents, or shall set themselves down to the laborious acquisition of some Christian language, that they might either have access to Scripture, or the ability of converse with men that are skilled in the mysteries of the faith. But this taste which they do not find, they expect to create—and for this purpose, is there now an incessant application to Pagan countries, of means and instruments from without—and many are the lengthened and the hazardous journeys which have been undertaken—and voyages of splendid enterprise have recently been crowned with splendid moral achievements; insomuch, that even the ferocity and licentiousness of the savage character have given way under the power of the truth; and lands, that within the remembrance of many now alive, rankled with the worst abominations of idolatry, have now exchanged them for the arts and the decencies of civilization; for village schools, and Christian Sabbaths, and venerable pastors, who first went forth as missionaries, and, as the fruits of their apostolic labour, among these outcast wanderers, can now rejoice over holy grandsires, and duteous children, and all that can gladden the philanthropic eye, in the peace, and purity, and comfort of pious families.

Now, amid the splendour and the interest of these more conspicuous operations, it is often not adverted to, how much work of a missionary character is indispensable for perpetuating, and still more for extending Christianity at home—how families, within the distance of half-a-mile, may lapse, without observation or sympathy on our part, into a state of practical heathenism—how, within less than an hour's walk, hundreds may be found, who morally and spiritually live at as wide a separation from the Gospel, and all its ordinances, as do the barbarians of another continent—how, in many of our crowded recesses, the families, which, out of sight, and out of Christian sympathy, have accumulated there, might, at length, sink and settle down into a listless, and lethargic, and, to all appearance, impracticable population—leaving the Christian teacher as much to do with them, as has the first missionary when he touches on a yet unbroken shore. It is vain to expect, that by a proper and primary impulse originating with themselves, those aliens from Christianity will go forth on the inquiry after it. The messengers of Christianity must go forth upon them. Many must go to and fro amongst the streets, and the lanes, and those deep intricacies, that teem with human life, to an extent far beyond the eye or imagination of the unobservant passenger, if we are to look for the increase either of a spiritual taste, or of scriptural knowledge among the families. That mass which is so dense of mind, and, therefore, so dense of immortality, must be penetrated in the length and in the breadth of it; and then many will be

found, who, however small their physical distance from the sound of the Gospel, stand at as wide a moral distance therefrom, as do the children of the desert—and to overpass *this* barrier, to send out upon this outfield, such ministrations as might reclaim its occupiers to the habits and the observations of a Christian land, to urge and obtrude, as it were, upon the notice of thousands, what, without such an advancement, not one of them might have moved a footstep in quest of—these are so many approximations, that, to all intents and purposes, have in them the character; and might, with the blessing of God, have also the effect of a missionary enterprise.

When we are commanded to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, our imagination stretches forth beyond the limits of Christendom; and we advert not to the millions who are within these limits, nay, within the sight of Christian temples, and the sound of Sabbath bells, yet who never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They live to manhood, and to old age, deplorably ignorant of the way of salvation; and in ignorance, too, not the less deplorable that it is wilful. It is this which so fearfully aggravates their guilt, that, on the very confines of light, they remain in darkness; and thereby prove, that it is a darkness which they love, and which they choose to persist in. Thus it will be found more tolerable for the heathen abroad, than for the heathen at home—and therefore it is, that for the duty of our text, the wilds of Pagan idolatry, or of Mahometan delusion, are not the only theatres—that for

its full performance, it is not enough that we equip the missionary vessel, and go in quest of untaught humanity at a distance, and hold converse with the men of other climes, and of other tongues, and rear on some barbarous shore, the Christianized village, as an outpost in that spiritual warfare, by which we hope, at length, to banish depravity and guilt, even from the farthest extremities of our species. These are noble efforts, and altogether worthy of being extended and multiplied a hundred fold. But they are not the only efforts of Christian philanthropy—nor can they be sustained as a complete discharge from the obligation of preaching the Gospel to every creature under heaven. For the accomplishment of this, there must not only be a going forth on the vast and untrodden spaces that are without; there must be a filling up of the numerous and peopled vacancies that are within—a busy, internal locomotion, that might circulate, and disperse, and branch off to the right and to the left, among the many thousand families which are at hand: And thoroughly to pervade these families; to make good a lodgment in the midst of them, for the nearer or the more frequent ministrations of Christianity than before; to have gained welcome for the Gospel testimony into their houses, and, in return, to have drawn any of them forth to attendance on the place of Sabbath and of solemn services—this, also, is to act upon our text, this is to do the part, and to render one of the best achievements of a missionary.

"How can they believe," says Paul, "without a preacher,"—and "how can they preach, except

they be sent?" To make sure this process, there must be a juxtaposition between him who declares the word, and them who are addressed by it—but to make good this juxtaposition, the Apostle never imagines that alienated man is, of his own accord, to move towards the preacher—and, therefore, that the preacher must be sent, or must move towards him. And, perhaps, it has not been adverted to, that in the very first steps of this approximation, there is an encouragement for going onward, and for plying the families of a city population with still nearer and more besetting urgencies than before. It is not known how much the very juxtaposition of an edifice for worship, tells upon the church-going habit of the contiguous householders—how many there are who will not move at the sound of a distant bell, that with almost mechanical sureness, will go forth, and mingle with the stream of passengers, who are crowding the way to a place that is at hand—how children, lured, perhaps, at the first, by curiosity, are led so to reiterate their attendance, as to be landed in a most precious habit for youth and for manhood—how this tendency spreads by talk, and sympathy, and imitation, through each little vicinity; and thus, in groups, or in clusters, might adjoining families be gained over to the ordinances of religion—how the leaven, when once set a-going, might spread by the fermentation of converse, and mutual sentiment, through the whole lump; till over the face of a whole city department, the Christian fabric, which stands conspicuously in the midst of it, and whither its people are rung every

Sabbath, to the ministrations of the Gospel, might come to be its place of general repair; and attendance there be at length proceeded on as one of the decencies of its established observation. Some of the influences in this process may appear slight or fanciful to the superficial eye—and yet they are known, and familiarly known, to be of powerful operation. You must surely be aware, that it makes all the practical difference in the world, to the retail and custom even of an ordinary shop, should it deviate, by a very small hairbreadth, from the minutest convenience of the public—should it retire, by ever so little from the busy pavement, or have to be ascended by two or three steps, or require the slightest turn and change of direction from that beaten path which passengers do inveterately walk in. And human nature on a week-day, is human nature on the Sabbath. There is no saying on how slight or trivial a circumstance it may be made to turn—and odd as the illustration may appear, we feel confident that we have not, at present, either a profound or a pious hearer, who will undervalue one single stepping-stone, by which a hearer more might be brought to the house of God—who will despise any of the means, however humble, that bring a human creature within the reach of that word, which is able to sanctify and save him—who will forget the wonted style of God's administrations, by which, on these minutest incidents of life, the greatest events of history are oft suspended—or, who will deny that the same Being, who, by the flight of a single bird, turned the pursuers of Mahomet away from him, and so

spared the instrument by which a gross and grievous superstition hath found an ascendancy over millions of immortal spirits, that He can enlist in the cause of His own Son, even the least and slightest familiarities of human practice; and with links, which in themselves are exceeding small, can fasten and uphold the chain, which runs through the earthly pilgrimage of man, and reaches to his eternity.

But after all, though local conveniency may allure, in the first instance, to the house of God, local conveniency will not detain the attendance of multitudes, unless there be a worth and a power in the services which are rendered there—unless there be a moral earnestness in the heart of the preacher, which may pour forth a sympathy with itself through the hearts of a listening congregation—unless, acquitting himself as an upright minister of the New Testament, he expound with faithfulness, and some degree of energy, those truths which are unto salvation; and so distribute among his fellow-sinners, the alone substantial and satisfying food of the soul—unless such a demonstration be given of the awful realities in which we deal, as to awaken in many bosoms the realizing sense of death, and of the judgment-seat—and, above all, unless the demands of the law, with its accompanying severities and terrors, be so urged on the conviction of guilty man, as to make it fall with welcome upon his ear, when told, that unto him a Saviour has been born. These are the alone elements of a rightful and well-earned popularity. Eloquence may dazzle—and argument may compel

the homage of its intellectual admirers—and fashion may even, when these are wanting, sustain through its little hour of smile and of sunshine, a complacent attendance on the reigning idol of the neighbourhood—but it is only if armed with the panoply of scriptural truth, that there will gather and adhere to him a people who hunger for the bread of life, and who make a business of their eternity. To fill the church well, we must fill the pulpit well; and see that the articles of the peace-speaking blood, and the sanctifying Spirit, are the topics that be dearest to the audience, and on which the Christian orator who addresses them most loves to expatiate. These form the only enduring staple of good and vigorous preaching; and unless they have a breadth, and a prominency, and a fond reiteration in the sermons that shall be delivered from the place where we now stand,* they either will not, or ought not to be listened to.

Yet grieved and disappointed should we be, did he confine himself to Sabbath ministrations—did he not go forth, and become the friend and the Christian adviser of all who dwell within the limits of his vineyard—did he not act the part of an Apostle among you, from house to house, and vary the fatigue of his preparations for the pulpit, by a daily walk amongst the ignorant, or the sick, or the sorrowful, or the dying. It is your part to respect, as you would a sanctuary, that solitude to which, for hours together, he should commit himself, in the work of

* This Sermon was preached at the opening of a city chapel, which has a local district assigned to it, and whose rule of seat-letting is on the territorial principle.

meditating the truths of salvation—and it is his part to return your delicacy by his labours of love, by the greetings of his cordial fellowship, by his visits of kindness. It is a wrong imagination on the side of a people, when they look on the Sabbath for a vigorous exposition of duty or doctrine, from him whom they teaze, and interrupt, and annoy, through the week—and it is a wrong imagination on the side of a pastor, when looking on the church as the sole arena of his usefulness, he does not relax the labour of a spirit that has been much exercised on the great topics of the Christian ministry, by frequent and familiar intercourse among those, whom, perhaps, he has touched or arrested by his Sabbath demonstrations. You ought to intrude not upon his arrangements and his studies; but he ought, in these arrangements, to provide the opportunities of ample converse with every spiritual patient, with every honest inquirer. You should be aware of the distinction that he makes between that season of the day which is set apart for retirement, and that season of the day which lies open to the duty of holding courteous fellowship with all—and of hiding not himself from his own flesh. It is the gross insensibility which obtains to the privileges both of a sacred and literary order—it is the disturbance of a perpetual inroad on that prophet's chamber, which ought, at all times, to be a safe retreat of contemplation—it is the incessant struggle that must be made for a professional existence, with irksome application, and idle ceremony, and even the urgencies of friendship—these are sufficient to explain those

pulpit imbecillities, of which many are heard to complain, while themselves they help to create them. And, therefore, if you want to foster the energies of your future clergyman; if you would co-operate with him in those mental labours, by which he provides through the week for the repast of your Sabbath festival; if it is your desire that an unction and a power shall be felt in all his pulpit ministrations; if here you would like to catch a glow of heaven's sacredness, and receive that fresh and forcible impulse upon your spirits, which might send you forth again with a redoubled ardour of holy affection and zeal on the business of life, and make you look and long for the coming Sabbath, as another delightful resting-place on your journey towards Zion—then suffer him to breathe, without molestation, in that pure and lofty region, where he might inhale a seraphic fervency, by which to kindle among his hearers his own celestial fire, his own noble enthusiasm. If it be this, and not the glee of companionship, or the drudgeries of ordinary clerkship that you want from your minister, then leave, I beseech you, his time in his own hand, and hold his asylum to be unviolable.

But, we trust, that from this asylum his excursions will be frequent—and sure we are, that nought but an affectionate forthgoing is necessary on his part, that he may have a warm and a willing reception upon yours. It is utterly a mistake, that any population, whatever be their present habits, will discourage the approaches of a Christian minister to their families. It is a particularly wrong imagination, that in cities there is a hard or

an insolent defiance among the labouring classes, which no assiduities of service or of good-will on the part of their clergyman can possibly overcome. Let him but try what their temperament is in this matter, and he will find it in every way as courteous and inviting, as among the most primitive of our Scottish peasantry. Let him be but alert to every call of threatening disease among his people, and the ready attendant upon every death-bed—let him ply not his fatiguing, but his easy and most practicable rounds of visitation in the midst of them—let him be zealous for their best interests, and not in the spirit of a fawning obsequiousness, but in that of a manly, intelligent, and honest friendship, let him stand forth as the guardian of the poor, the guide and the counsellor of their children; it is positively not in human nature to withstand the charm and the power which lie in such unwearied ministrations—and if visibly prompted by the affinity that there is in the man's heart for his fellows of the species, there will, by a law of the human constitution, be an affinity in theirs towards him, which they cannot stifle, though they would; and they will have no wish to stifle it.

It is to this principle, little as it has been recognised, and still less as it has been proceeded on, it is to this that we confide the gathering at length of a congregation within these walls, and that too from the vicinities by which we are immediately surrounded. That the chapel will be filled at the very outset, from the district which has been assigned to it, we have no expectation. But we do fondly hope, as the fruit of his un-

wearied services, that its minister will draw the kind regards of the people after him; that an impression will be made by his powerful and reiterated addresses in the bosom of their families, which may not stop there; that the man who prays at every funeral, and sits by every dying bed, and seizes every opening for Christian usefulness that is afforded to him by the visitations of Providence on the houses of the surrounding neighbourhood, and who, while a fit companion for the great in his vineyard, is a ready, and ever accessible friend to the poorest of them all—it is utterly impossible, that such a man, after his work of varied and active benevolence, will have nought to address on the Sabbath but empty walls. After being the eye-witness of what he does, there will spring up a most natural desire, and that cannot be resisted, to hear what he says. It is not yet known how much such attentions as these, kept up, and made to play in busy and constant recurrence upon one local neighbourhood—it is not yet known how much and how powerfully they tell in drawing the hearts of the people towards him who faithfully and with honest friendship, discharges them. They will make the pulpit which he fills a common centre of attraction to the whole territory over which he expatiates—and we need not that we may see exemplified in human society, the worth and importance of the pastoral relationship, we need not go alone among the sequestered vales, or the far and upland retreats of our country parishes. It is not a local phenomenon dependent on geography. It is a general one, dependent on the nature of

man; on those laws of the heart, which no change of place or of circumstances can obliterate. To gain the moral ascendancy of which we speak, it is enough if the upright and laborious clergyman have human feelings and human families on every side of him. It signifies not where. Give him Christian kindness, and this will pioneer a way for him amongst all the varieties of place and of population. Besides the smoke, and the din, and the dizzying wheel of crowded manufactories, will he find as ready an introduction for himself and for his office, as if his only walk had been among peaceful hamlets, and with nought but the romance and the rusticity of nature spread out before him. It is utterly a wrong imagination, and in the face both of experience and of prophecy, that in towns there is an impracticable barrier against the capabilities and the triumphs of the Gospel—that in towns the cause of human amelioration must be abandoned in despair—that in towns it is not by the architecture of chapels, but by the architecture of prisons, and of barracks, and of bridewells, we are alone to seek for the protection of society—that elsewhere a moralizing charm may go forth among the people, from village schools and sabbath services, but that there is a hardihood and a ferocity in towns, which must be dealt with in another way, and against which all the artillery of the pulpit is feeble as infancy—that a foul and a feverish depravity has settled there, which no spiritual application will ever extinguish: For amid all the devisings for the peace and order of our community, do we find it to be the shrewd and

sturdy apprehension of many, that all which can be achieved in our overgrown cities, is by the strength of the secular arm; that a stern and vigorous police will do more for public morals, than a whole band of ecclesiastics; that a periodical execution will strike a more salutary terror into the hearts of the multitude, than do the dreadest fulminations of the preacher's voice—and this will explain the derision and the distrust wherewith that argument is listened to, which goes to set forth the efficacy of Christian doctrine, or to magnify the office of him who delivers it.

We can offer no computation that will satisfy such antagonists as these, of the importance of Christianity even to the civil and the temporal well-being of our species; and we shall, therefore, plead the authority of our text, for extending its lessons to every creature—for going forth with it to every haunt and every habitation where immortal beings are to be found—for not merely carrying it beyond the limits of Christendom, but for filling up with instruction the many blank, and vacant, and still unoccupied places, teeming with population, that, even within these limits have not been overtaken. What! shall we be told, that if there is a man under heaven, whom the Gospel has not yet reached, it is but obedience to a last and solemn commandment, when the missionary travels even to the farthest verge of our horizon, that he may bear it to his door—and shall we be told of the thousands who are beside us, that, though their souls are perishing for lack of knowledge, we might, without one care or one effort abandon them? Are

we to give up as desperate, the Christian reformation of our land, when we read of those mighty achievements, and those heavenly outpourings, by which even the veriest wilds of heathenism have been fertilized—or, with such an instrument to work by as that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which in the hands of the Spirit of God hath wrought its miracles on the men of all ages, shall we forbear, as a hopeless enterprise, the evangelizing of our own homes, the eternal salvation of our own families? "Be of good cheer," says the Spirit to the Apostle, "I have much people for thee in this city; and that, a city, too, the most profligate and abandoned that ever flourished on the face of our world. And still the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save. Neither is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. It is open as ever to the cry of your intercessions—and on these, we would devolve our cause. We entreat the fellowship of your prayers. We know, that all human exertion, and eloquence, and wisdom, are vain, without them—that, lacking that influence which is gotten down by supplications from on high, sermons are but high-sounding cymbals, and churches but naked architecture—that mere pains are of no avail, and that it only lies within the compass of pains and of prayers, to do any thing.

And we, indeed, have great reason for encouragement, when we think of the subject of our message. When we are bidden in the text to preach, it is to preach the Gospel—it is to proclaim good news in the hearing of the people—it is to sound forth what surely must be felt welcome by many—it is

to sound forth the glad tidings of great joy—it is to tell even the chief of sinners, that God is now willing to treat him as a sinner no longer; that He invites him to all the honours of righteousness; and that in virtue of a blood which cleanseth from all sin, and of an obedience, to the rewards of which he is freely and fully invited, there is not a guilty creature in our world, who may not draw nigh. Should he who preaches within these walls, turn out the faithful and the energetic expounder of this word of salvation—should the blessing of God be upon his ways, and that demonstration which cometh from on high, accompany his words—should he, filled with zeal in the high cause of your immortality, be instant among you in season, and out of season—and devoted to the work of his sacred ministry, he make it his single aim to gather in a harvest of unperishable spirits, that by him as an instrument of grace, have been rescued from hell, and raised to a blissful eternity—should this be indeed the high walk of his unremitting toil, and his unwearied perseverance—then, such is the power of the divine testimony, when urged out of the fulness of a believer's heart, and made to fall with the impression of his undoubted sincerity on those whom he addresses; that for ourselves we shall have no fear of a good and a glorious issue to this undertaking—and, therefore, as Paul often cast the success of his labours on the prayers of them for whom he laboured, would I again entreat that your supplications do ascend to the throne of grace for him who is to minister amongst you in word and in doctrine—that he may, indeed, be a

pastor according to God's own heart, who shall feed a people here with knowledge and with spiritual understanding—that the travail of his soul may be blest to the conversion of many sons and daughters unto righteousness—that he may prove a comfort to all your hearts, and a great public benefit to all your families.

DISCOURSE XIII.

ON THE HONOUR DUE TO ALL MEN.

"Honour all men.——Honour the king."—1 PETER ii. 17.

To honour all men is alike the lesson of Philosophy and Religion. He who studies Humanity, not according to its accidental distinctions in society, but in its great and general characteristics—he who looks to its moral nature as a piece of curious and interesting mechanism, all whose processes are as accurately exemplified in the mind of the poorest individual, as the laws or the constructions of anatomy are in his body—he whose office it is to contemplate the fabric of its principles and powers, and who can recognise even in humble life the goodliest specimens of both—with him the distinctions of rank are apt to be lost and forgotten, in the homage which he renders to man, simply as the possessor of a constitution that has so often exercised and regaled his faculties as an object of liberal curiosity. The homeliest peasant bears within the confines of his inner man, that very tablet on the lines and characters of which the highest philosopher may for years perhaps have been most intensely gazing. All the secrets of our wondrous economy are deposited there; and, in the heart even of the most unlettered man, the memory and the understanding and the imagination and the conscience and every other function and

property of the yet inaccessible soul are all in busy operation. To the owner of such an unexplored microcosm, we attach somewhat of the same reverence which we entertain for some profound and hidden mystery—and he who has laboured most anxiously to seize upon the mysteries of our nature, and therefore feels most profoundly how deep and how inscrutable they are, he perhaps is the most predisposed by his pursuits and his habits to "honour all men."

Somewhat of the same sentiment is impressed upon us in the midst of a crowd—or as we pass along that street which is alive from morning to night with its endless flow of passengers. We are aware of no contemplation, that is more fitted to annihilate in one's own mind the importance of self; or rather to multiply this feeling, and make it be transferred by us to each individual of that restless and eager population by whom we are surrounded. To think of each having within the precincts of his own bosom, a chamber of thoughts and purposes and fond imaginations as warm and teeming as our own, and of the busy history that is going on there; that every one of the immense multitude is the centre of his own distinct amphitheatre, which, however unknown to us, is the universe to him; that each meditative countenance of the vast and interminable number bespeaks a play of hopes and wishes and interests within, in every way as active, and felt to be of as great magnitude and urgency, as we experience in ourselves—further to think that should my own heart cease its palpitations, and were the light of my own

wakeful spirit to be extinguished for ever, that still there would be a world as full of life and intelligence as before; to think of myself as an unmissed or unnoticed thing among the myriads who are around me, or rather to think that with each of these myriads there are desires as vivid, and sensibilities as deep, and cares as engrossing, and social or family affections as tender, as those which I carry about with me in that little world to which no one eye hath access but the eye of my own consciousness—there is a humility that ought to be impressed by such a contemplation; or, if it do not utterly abase the reckoning that we have of ourselves, it ought at least to exalt our reckoning of all other men, and teach us to hold in honour those, who in the workings of the same nature and fellowship of the very same interests so thoroughly partake with us.

It is true, that, in what may be called the outward magnitude of these interests, there is a wide distance between a sovereign and his subject —between the cares of an empire, and the cares of a small household economy. That is, the empire externally speaking is greater than the household—while inwardly the cares, the cogitations, the sensibilities of the heart, whether oppressive or joyful, may be altogether the same. They be a different set of objects, wherewith the monarch is conversant, and that keep in play the system of his thoughts and emotions, just as it is upon a different sort of food that his blood circulates or that his physical system is upholden. But as the peasant is like to him in respect of anatomy, so,

with all the diversity of circumstances, he is substantially like to him, in the frame and mechanism of his spirit. The outward causes by which each is excited are vastly different; but the inward excitement of both is the same—and, could we explore the little world that is in each of the two bosoms, we should recognise in each the same busy rotation of hopes and fears and wishes and anxieties. If it be indeed a just calculation, that there is a superiority, a surpassing worth in the moral which far outweighs the material, then, let the cottage be as widely dissimilar from the palace as it may, there is a similarity between their inhabitants, not in that which is minute, but in that which is momentous—and our weightiest arguments for honouring the king bear with efficacy upon the lesson, to honour all men.

And moreover, let us but rate the importance of one thinking and living spirit, when compared with all the mute and unconscious materialism which is in our universe. Without such a spirit, the whole of visible existence were but an idle waste—a nothingness—for what is beauty were there no eye to look upon it, and what is music were there no ear to listen, and what is matter in all its rich and wondrous varieties without a spectator mind to be regaled by the contemplation of them? One might conceive the very panorama that now surrounds us—the same earth and sea and skies that we now look upon—the same graces on the face of terrestrial nature, the same rolling wonders in the firmament—yet without one spark of thought or animation throughout the unpeopled

amplitude. This in effect were nonentity. To put out all the consciousness that is in nature were tantamount to the annihilation of nature; and the lighting up again of but one mind in the midst of this desolation, would of itself restore significancy to the scene, and be more than equivalent to the first creation of it. In other words, one living mind is of more worth than a dead universe—or there is that in every single peasant to which I owe sublimer homage, than, if untenanted of mind, I should yield to all the wealth of this lower world, to all those worlds that roll in spaciousness and in splendour through the vastnesses of astronomy.

Our Saviour Himself hath instituted the comparison between a world and a soul—and, whether both were alike perishable or alike enduring, His estimate of the soul's superiority would hold. He founds his computation on our brief tenure of all that is earthly, and on the magnitude of those abiding interests which wait the immortal spirit in other scenes of existence. All men are immortal. There is a grandeur of destination here, that far outweighs all the pride and pretension of this world's grandeur. Those lordly honours which some men fetch from the antiquity of their race are but poor indeed, when compared with that more signal honour which all men have in the eternity of their duration. In respect of immortality, the great and the small ones of the earth stand on an equal eminence—and in respect of the death which comes before it, both have to sink to the same humiliating level. The prince shares with the peasant in the horror and loathsomeness of death

—the peasant shares with the prince in the high distinction of immortality. It is because in the poorest man's bosom, there resides an undying principle—it is because of that endless futurity which is before him, and in the progress of which all the splendours and obscurations of our present state will be speedily forgotten—it is because, though of yesterday, the bliss and the brightness of coming centuries may be upon his path; and, whatever the complexion of his future history shall be, yet the sublime character of eternity shall rest upon it—it is because of these that humanity, however it be clothed and conditioned in this evanescent world, should be the object of an awful reverence; and if, by reason of those perishable glories which sit on a monarch's brow for but one generation, it be imperative to honour the king—then, by reason of those glories which the meanest may attain to, and which are to last for ever, it is still more imperative to honour all men.

It is in virtue of the natural equality between man and man, of the like noble prospects and the like high capacities among all the members of the species—that we have never hesitated on the question of popular or plebeian education; and when it is asked, how far should the illumination of the lower orders in society be permitted to go?—we do not scruple to reply, that it should be to the very uttermost of what their taste and their time and their convenience will permit. There have been a dread and a jealousy upon this topic wherewith we cannot at all sympathize—somewhat of the same alarm for the progress of scholarship among

the working classes, that is felt for the progress of sedition—just as if the admission of light amongst them were to throw the whole mass into a state of busy and mischievous fermentation—and some great coming disorder were surely to result from the growing intelligence of those who form the vast majority of our commonwealth. And, in addition to what injury it is apprehended the social edifice at large might sustain from the elevation of the popular mind, it is further thought that individually it is fraught with uttermost discomfort to the people themselves; that it will induce a restlessness, a discontent, a wayward ambition, wholly unsuited to their state as labourers; that henceforward they will spurn at the ignoble drudgeries of their lot; and that the fruit of making them scholars will be wholly to unhinge and unsettle them as workmen. And when once this impatience becomes general, a certain fierce and feverish aspiring, it is feared, will run throughout that class in society who even now by the superiority of their muscular force are enough formidable—and of whom the terror is, that when once a mental force is superadded to the muscular, they will overleap all the barriers of public safety, and be the fell instruments of a wild and wasteful anarchy over the face of the land.

This is not altogether the place for exposing what we deem to be the utter groundlessness of such imaginations; and therefore, without touching at all on the political apprehension lest Education should lodge a power that is dangerous in the hands of the labouring classes,—we shall just say

of the personal, or of that which relates to the habits and character of the individual labourer, that we believe it to be scarcely ever if at any time realized. We positively find them to be among the best symptoms of a trusty and well-conditioned mechanic, if, upon entering his house, we find the humble library upon his shelves—or if in taking account of his hours, we find the time which many give to evening dissipation given by him to the attendance or the preparations of a mechanic school. There is no such discrepancy between the powers and the principles of our complex nature, no such awkward sorting or balancing of parts in the human constitution, as that there must be a stifling of some in order to make room for the right and prosperous operation of the others—as, for example, that all liberal curiosity, all appetite for the informations of science should be kept in check, lest industry be relaxed, or the cares of a family provision be altogether forgotten. The ingredients of our compound being are really in far better adjustment than that all should be so very apt to go into disorder, upon any one of them being fostered into activity by the excitement of its own peculiar gratification—and it will be found that a taste for literature, and patient assiduity in labour, and a reflective prudence in every matter of family economics, and a habit of sound and good workmanship on the one hand, with a well exercised intellect even in the subjects of general speculation upon the other—that all these may be at work, and in fullest harmony together with one and the same individual. Instead of spoiling him as an

artisan, they would only transform him into an artisan of a higher caste—and as there is a general movement all over the land for a higher education to our people, let us do nothing to curb the energies of their aspiring intellect—but rather rejoice in the bright anticipation that must at length be realized, of a well-taught and a highly lettered peasantry. On a progress like this we would lay no limitation. Let it go freely and indefinitely onwards—nor be afraid, as many are, lest there should be too much of schooling or even too much of science for the common people. That were a noble achievement in political economy, did it point out the way by which, through better wages and less work, the children of handicraft and of hard labour might be somewhat lightened of their toils. And that were a still nobler achievement in philanthropy, could their then wider and more frequent intervals of repose be reclaimed from loose and loathsome dissipation—could even an infant but growing taste for philosophy be made to supplant all the coarser depravities of human vice—and they, admitted to more of companionship than they now have with men of a higher walk in society, give frequent demonstration, that, even amid the drudgery of their humble condition, there was among them much of the unquenched fire of genius, and a still vigorous play of those perceptions and those powers by which our common nature is ennobled.

Having said thus much for that education which gives the knowledge of science to the common people—we feel ourselves placed on still higher

vantage ground, when we plead for that education to them which gives the knowledge of religion. If we hold the one to be desirable, we hold the other to be indispensable. In our estimation there is a certain narrowness of soul, among those who are jealous even of their most daring ascents into the region of a higher scholarship; but to lay an interdict upon all scholarship, is in truth nothing better than the midnight darkness of Popery. And yet, in certain quarters of our land, there still lurks, in deep and settled inveteracy, that intolerance which would withhold the very alphabet from our population; and though in one respect, it is the key to the revealed mysteries of heaven, the instrument for unlocking that gospel which was designed so specially for the ignorant and the poor—yet still there be some who, aloft from all sympathy with the lower orders, can admit of no higher demand for them than the mere wants of their animal existence. The eternity of the poor does not enter into their care or computation at all. They are viewed in scarcely any other light than as the instruments of labour, as so many pieces of living mechanism that have their useful application along with those other springs and principles of action which keep the busy apparatus of our great manufactories in play—their limbs as the levers of a certain kind of machinery, and the spirit that is within them but as that moving force by which the human enginery is set agoing. The immortality of this spirit is as little regarded, as if it were indeed but a vapour that passeth away. It is valued only because of the materialism which it

animates, or of the motion which by means of a curious and complicated framework, it can impress on any tangible thing that is transformed thereby into some article of merchandise. It is thus that Humanity is apt to be addressed or treated with, singly for the physical strength which it might be made to yield in the service of busy artisanship—and, without one ungenerous reflection on the great capitalists of our land, it is thus that sometimes at least there is a certain grossness of mercantile spirit, in virtue of which, our nature, in despite of all its noble capacities, and the exceeding grandeur of its ultimate destination, is very apt to be grossly brutalized.

It is therefore the more refreshing, when, in some densely peopled territory that is all in a fervour with the smoke and the din and the unremitting turmoil of its many fabrications, there is seen an interest to arise in the religion of the assembled host, and on the side of their immortal well-being—when, for so wide and plenteous a harvest, there at length appears a band of resolute and devoted labourers—when, in the midst of a field so rich in the materials for a great spiritual manufacture that hath its gains and its proceeds in eternity, men are to be found of compass enough and Christianity enough for this highest enterprise of charity—when a company is formed with a design and on a speculation so magnificent, as far to surpass the sublimest adventures of commerce—and, instead of that transformation on the rude produce of our country, which is effected by the labour of human hands, it is proposed to go forth

on the people of the country as the subjects of a nobler transformation; and to impress upon human souls, now in the darkness and earthliness of nature, a glory that is unperishable.

It is a reproach to the spirit of merchandise,—when in its exclusive demand for the physical strength and service of human beings, it gives but little regard to their eternity—yet among the sons of merchandise, we do meet with many of those zealous and enlightened philanthropists, who, by their efforts in the cause both of common and of Christian scholarship, have done much to redeem the imputation. There is indeed the grossest injustice in every imputation that leads to the fastening of an odium or an obloquy, upon a whole order—and we might here take the opportunity of saying in reference to another order, and when we hear so much of an alleged conspiracy on the part of monarchs against the illumination of our species, it is far indeed from holding universally. There is a growing liberality upon the subject among all the classes of society—and as surely as workmasters are now learning that education furnishes them with their best and most valuable servants—so surely will Kings also learn, that the firmest basis upon which their authority can be upholden, is a virtuous and a well schooled peasantry.

The ancient prejudice upon this question is now on all hands rapidly subsiding. The cause of popular ignorance is no longer incorporated, as it wont to be, with the cause of loyalty and established order. Even they who sit in the highest

places, and were at all times the most sensitively fearful of any new element, that, when brought into play, might derange and unsettle the existing framework of society—even they can now look without alarm on that heaving of the popular mind towards a higher scholarship, which now is fermenting and spreading over the whole face of the British commonwealth. We are aware of nothing more truly important to the cause of education, than some recent practical testimonies of our landed aristocracy to the worth of Scotland's parochial teachers, and their offer of a helping hand to secūre and to speed the ascent of our common people, though already perhaps the most lettered in Europe or in the world, even above the level of their present acquirements. There could not more authentic demonstration have been given, and from a quarter more thoroughly unsuspicious, to the safety of a learning for the vulgar—and there is nought more delightful than thus to behold the upper classes of society, giving welcome and encouragement to the lower for a nearer assimilation with themselves in that knowledge which is more honourable than wealth, in those mental accomplishments which shed its truest grace and dignity upon our nature.

There are two opposite directions in which we have to witness what may be called an ultra or extreme politics. One of those extremes is now getting fast obsolete at least in Scotland—for in our sister country there is still an inveteracy about it, which may not give way for perhaps one or two generations. To picture it forth most effectually,

we might seize in imagination upon some one individual by whom it is realized—who, frank and generous and kind-hearted in all the relations of private society, yet on every question of public or parliamentary warfare shows all the fiercest antipathies of high and antiquated cavaliership—who, merciful and munificent in all his dealings with his own people, yet eyes a boding mischief in every new and advancing movement by the people of the land—who deems it perhaps one of the glories of Old England to have a jovial and well fed peasantry, yet would feel the education of them to be a raising of them out of their places, and so a disturbance on the sober and settled orthodoxy of other days—who fears a lurking sectarianism in this active and widely diffused scholarship—that might afterwards break forth into outrage on England's venerated throne, and her noble hierarchy; and therefore would vastly rather than this age of philanthropic restlessness, have the age brought back again, when pastime and holiday and withal a veneration for Church had full ascendant over the hearts and habits of a then unlettered population. Still in many of England's princely halls, in many a baronial residence, there exists a feeling that her golden time has passed away—and that this new device of a popular education is among the deadliest of the destroyers. High in loyalty, and devoted by all the influences of sentiment and ancestry and sworn partisanship to the prerogatives of monarchy; they honour the king—but, overlooking the intellect and the capacity and the immortal nature that reside even in the meanest of his sub-

jects, and so regardless as they are of the still higher prerogatives of mind; they do not and they know not how to honour all men.

But in counterpart to this, there is another extreme that to our taste is greatly more offensive than the former—when the cause of education is vilified by mixing up with it in the meantime, that accursed thing which education at length will utterly exterminate—when a mechanic school is made the vehicle of an outrageous disaffection to all authority, and a mechanic publication breathes the fierceness of radicalism throughout all its pages—when one cannot in any way devise either for the religion or the science of our lower orders, but this unclean spirit must insinuate and turn it all to loathsomeness; and every honest effort to obtain a more enlightened peasantry is either paralyzed or poisoned, by the obtruded alliance of men, who bear no other regard to the people than as the instruments of some great public or political overthrow. Still it vouches nobly for the good of a people's scholarship, that this abuse is chiefly exemplified in that land where they are just emerging from ignorance, and that in our own more lettered country it is comparatively unknown —that it is there and not here where this cause has been seized upon by demagogues, who, while they would flatter the multitude into the belief that they honour all men, give full manifestation by all their writings and their ways that they do not honour the king.

It is in such conflicts of human passion and human party, that Christianity comes forth in the

meekness of wisdom, and points out to us the more excellent way. It unites loyalty to the King with love nay reverence for the very humblest of his subject population—and can both do homage to the dignity of office that sits upon the one, and to those exalted capacities both of worth and of intellect which lie in wide and wealthy diffusion through the other. There is nought of the pusillanimous in its devotion to the Crown, and nought of the factious and the turbulent in the descents which it makes among the common people. We have felt that glow which the presence of a monarch can awaken, when, instead of the crouching servility of bondsmen, we are conscious of nothing but the generous and high-minded enthusiasm of gallant chivalry. And equal to this is the pure and philanthropic triumph which the spectacle of a beggar's school is fitted to awaken, when instead of a fiery sedition lighted up in the heart and rankling its mischievous fermentations there, the mind indulges in the soothing perspective of that brighter day, when the whole community of our empire shall be moulded into a harmonious and well ordered family. To call forth the energies of the popular mind by the power of a high education being made to bear upon it, will most surely add to the stability of the throne, while it must serve to lift and to embellish the whole platform of society. It will speed the progress of the species, but not along a track of revolutionary violence. The moral perfectibility of the infidel may call for the demolition both of altars and of thrones—but the operations of the Christian philanthropist leave the fabric of

our civil polity untouched ; and, in that Millennium after which he aspires, he sees Kings to be the nursing fathers and Queens the nursing mothers of our Zion. He has no fellowship either with those who would revile the monarch, or who would refuse to enlighten the people—and, though fired with the hopes of some great and coming enlargement, he founds them on the prophecies of a book, whose precepts within the utterance of one breath and placed together in the same text, are to honour the King and to honour all men.

DISCOURSE XIV.

ON THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF FIDELITY.

"Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."—TITUS ii. 10.

IT is the duty of the Christian minister to bring forward not one part of the divine will, but all the parts of it—and whatever he sees urged and insisted upon in the Bible, he lies under the solemn obligation of urging and insisting upon it also. Now it is remarkable, that, when urging some of the commandments, he is looked upon as more religiously employed, than when urging some other of the commandments. There are certain subjects which do not carry to the eye of many, the same aspect of godliness with others. A sermon on sabbath-breaking, for example, would be regarded as a more characteristic exercise, and as more allied with the solemn and appropriate functions of the pulpit, than a sermon upon theft; and, generally speaking, while the duties of the first table are listened to by the more serious professors of Christianity with a pious and respectful feeling of their high importance—it may be observed that the duties of the second table, when urged in all their minuteness, and brought forward in all their varieties, and illustrated by references to the homely and familiar experience of human life, are looked upon as having a certain degree of earthli-

ness about them—to be as much inferior in point of religiousness to the duties of the first table, as the employments of a common week-day are inferior to the employments of the sabbath—in a word, while the one bears to many the aspect of sacredness, the other bears the aspect of secularity—and when a minister gives his strength and his earnestness for a whole sermon to the latter, there is a feeling among his hearers that he has descended from that high ground on which a godly or an orthodox minister loves to expatiate.

We forbear at present to enter into the explanation of this very notable peculiarity, though it does admit we think of a most interesting explanation. The thing complained of, forms a serious obstacle in the way of our attempts to enforce the whole will of God, and to explain the whole of his counsel. If there be any part of that will of which the exposition is resisted as a very odd and uncommon and perhaps ridiculous subject from the pulpit, how shall we be able to command a reverential hearing for it? In what way shall we establish the authority of God over all the concerns of a man's history? Should not the solemnity of religious obligation be made to overspread the whole field and compass of human affairs?—and if it be not so is not this deposing God from the supremacy which belongs to Him? Is it not just saying that there are places and occasions in which we will not have Him to reign over us? Is it not disowning His right of having all things done to His glory? And those hearers who love to be told of what they owe to God on the sabbath and in the holy days of sacra-

ment and prayer—but who love not to be told of what they owe Him in their shops and in their market places and in their every-day employments —they are just narrowing the limits of His jurisdiction, and with all their seeming reverence for godliness as the only high and appropriate theme for the pulpit, they are in fact wresting from God his sovereignty over the great bulk of human existence. With the quitrent of a few occasional acknowledgements, they are for securing the mighty remainder of time to themselves—and are for putting off with fragments that Being who demands of all His creatures, the homage of an entire service—the incense of a perpetual offering.

We should like all hearers to feel the religiousness of that topic which this text leads us to insist upon. We should like them to annex as serious a feeling of solemnity and obligation to the eighth of God's commandments, as to the fourth of His commandments. Both were announced in thunder from mount Sinai. Both were heard to issue in the same voice of authority from the throne of the lawgiver. The violations of both are written in the book of God's remembrance; and they are ranked among the bad deeds done in the body, which will bring down from the judgment-seat the same awful doom upon the children of iniquity. The place which the commandment possesses in the catalogue is surely of no great consequence in the matter. Enough that it be a commandment. Enough for one and for all of us that thus saith the Lord. He orders one thing, and He orders another. If the one thing must be observed with reverence, because

He orders it—there is precisely the same reason for the other thing being also observed with reverence. And if "sanctify the sabbath-day and keep it holy" be a godly and religious subject, then do we contend that, "Thou shalt not steal" is a godly and a religious subject also.

In this case the minister has no choice. If the consciences of any of his hearers are blind upon this subject, that is the very reason why he should labour to open and to enlighten them. He stands charged with the office of expounding and urging and solemnly insisting upon all the requisitions of the Bible. If he do not warn the sinner from his way, the sinner will die in his iniquity, but his blood will be required of him. This is perfectly decisive as to his conduct. It is with him a matter of self-interest, as well as of duty, to warn his hearers against all sin—and, knowing as he does that there is an awful day of reckoning before them, that he must appear in the midst of them at the bar of God, that he will be called upon to give an account of them and be examined upon this, whether he has watched over the souls of his people, and faithfully attempted to guard them against all error, and to warn them against all unrighteousness—woe be to him if he is deterred by any senseless or ignorant levity whatever, from coming forward with a faithful and a firm exposition of the truth, or from sounding in their ears this awful testimony of God's abhorrence of the sin of stealing, that thieves shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, we shall first endeavour to explain what the precise

sin is which the text warns us against. We shall secondly insist on its exceeding sinfulness, in spite of all the pleas which are offered to palliate or to excuse it. And thirdly we shall press the duty which is opposed to the sin of the text, that is, good fidelity by the motive which the text itself insists upon, that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

The sin of the text receives a particular name, and it must therefore receive a particular explanation. It is not called stealing, though it be certainly a species of it. Stealing is neither more nor less than taking to oneself what belongs to another, and what he does not give. We should apply this term to the act of a man who entered into another house than that in which he tarried, and bore away of the moveables he found in it—or to the act of a man who came to another farm than that on which he laboured, and carried off such produce as he could lift away with him—or to the act of a man who made out his access into a shop or a workhouse belonging to another master, and abstracted such money or such goods as he could lay his hand upon. There are so many acts of theft—and to give a clear idea of what that is which turns an act of theft into an act of purloining, we have only to conceive, that, instead of another entering the house, a servant within it were to help himself to such things as he had access to, without any understood allowance from the master or the mistress who employed him—or that, instead of another coming to a farm, a labourer belonging to it were to make a daily and a weekly habit of secret-

ing a part of its produce, for the purpose of feeding his own little stock, or helping out the maintenance of his young family—or that, instead of another finding his way into your shop or your workhouse, the man you employed to keep the one or to work in the other, were to pocket for his own use what he thinks he might bear away without too great a hazard of detection. All these are so many undoubted examples of theft—but such a theft as would more readily be characterised by the term purloining. To steal is to take that which is not our own. To purloin is to take that which is not our own—but then the thing so taken must be that which we have in trust, or that to which our situation as an agent or a servant or an overseer gives us free and frequent access. When purloining is done upon a large scale it sometimes changes its name, though not its nature. It is then called an embezzlement. To embezzle is quite equivalent to purloin in the nature of the act, though greater in the extent of it. Thus we have heard of the embezzlement of public stores, of the embezzlement of the royal treasury. It is an act of theft performed by a confidential agent of the crown—and we have succeeded in the object of all these explanations, if we have led our hearers to perceive the reason why Paul addresses the advice of the text to people in a particular situation. They are in the situation of servants—and, taking in the 9th verse, the whole advice runs thus, "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity,

that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.'

We now proceed in the second place to insist on the exceeding sinfulness of this sin, in spite of all the pleas which are offered to palliate or to excuse it.

The first palliation is a kind of tacit one, by which the understanding is imposed upon, and the conscience quieted, merely through the change of name which this crime has undergone. Because it is not commonly called stealing, it is not conceived to have the disgrace or the odiousness of stealing. There is a wonderful power of imposition in words —and how many a purloiner may quiet all that is troublesome within him by the reflection that what he does is not stealing; it is only taking. Thus may he try to escape the imputation of stealing, by merely giving a different name to his iniquity—but, if the thing thus taken be not his to take, it is to all intents and purposes, stealing—he merits the full disgrace of being called a thief—and, what is still more awful than all the disgrace with which this world can cover him, he is guilty of a sin, which, if persisted in, will most infallibly exclude him from the inheritance of the kingdom of God. To undeceive him, he should be made distinctly to know that there is no difference whatever in the sins; that an angry and offended God looks with equal displeasure upon both, and will assign to each the same awful punishment in the great day of reckoning. This low work of purloining is just stealing under another name. It is taking what belongs to another, and what that other has not given. Every

understanding will acknowledge, that, however it may be glossed over by another and a milder designation, it is an act of theft; and what every understanding will acknowledge, we want every conscience to feel. But we go further. We take up a principle contained in our Shorter Catechism, where it is said, in answer to the question, "Are all sins equally heinous in the sight of God?" That "some sins, by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others." Now purloining contains in it an aggravation which does not belong to a bare and simple example of stealing. The stranger who does not know me, and whom I never trusted, may come to my premises and steal of my property. But the servant who purloins does know me, lives under my roof, is maintained by my wages, and, above all, has had a confidence placed in him which he has chosen to abuse and to violate. I left a door open, or I made over a charge, or I invested him with a particular commission, and why? because I had faith in his integrity and discretion. The stranger thief is guilty of one vice—an act of dishonesty. The household thief is dishonest too; but he is more than this. He has betrayed the trust I put in him. He has repaid my good opinion of him, by an act of ingratitude and an act of unfaithfulness. I was led away by his fair appearances; and he has turned out a hypocrite. He has added to the guilt of stealing, the guilt of cunning and falsehood and habitual concealment. These are aggravations which make the purloining of the servant far more provoking to him who suffers by it,

than the depredations of the nightly vagabond. But they are not only more provoking to man—they are more provoking to a just and a holy God. The aggravations which we have just now spoken of will tell on the awful sentence of the great day. The discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart sees and judges of every one of them; and when the time cometh that the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, the low pilferments of the farm, of the family, and of the workshop, will appear to the shame and condemnation of the guilty.

But there is another plea on which the purloiner tries to find himself something like an acquittal, from the shame and the remorse of his secret iniquities. However great at the end of months or of years his depredations may be in the amount, yet, to escape detection, he is forced to make them small in the detail. The distinct and single theft of every one day is but a petty affair—and his conscience easily falls into the snare, that, as what he does take at any one time is so very little it is not worth the thinking of. But what right has he, we would ask, to make any addition to the eighth commandment? God says, "Thou shalt not steal," and then he brings the commandment to a close. He does not say thou shalt not steal much, leaving us at freedom to steal a little, and to judge how little we may steal with innocence and safety. He says, thou shalt not steal, and then he leaves off. If we steal the value of a farthing, it is a stolen farthing. It is evidence enough to convict of a breach of the eighth commandment, by which we are enjoined not to steal at all. Little as we may

think of it, it is enough to convict us of disobedience to the entire and absolute commandment of God—and it will turn out the accursed thing, which, if not repented of and not turned from, will be the death and the condemnation of our souls. He that is unjust in the least, says our Saviour, is unjust also in much. It may be so little as to be the very least—but if stolen, it is an act of injustice—and he who knew what was in man says, that he who can do the very least act of injustice can do a great one. O how many go to Hell with what they account small sins. Small sin! is sin a small matter? If we have stolen to the value of a single grain, we have broken the law of God; and do we call that an affair of small consequence? The moment we stretch forth our hand to what is another's, be it ever so little, we have broken the line which lies betwixt duty and rebellion. We have got over the wall which separates lawful from forbidden ground, and, however little way we have got on the forbidden ground, still we are on it—and, if apprehended there and brought to the bar of judgment, we shall be treated as criminals. Go not, ye purloiners and household thieves, to delude your consciences any more upon this subject. Go not to make any distinction which the law of God does not make. Think not that you will escape condemnation; because the thing stolen is so very little. Think not that this plea will serve you with God whose law must be fulfilled to the very last jot and tittle of it—and we tell you that if you ever pray and lift up your hands unto God—then though you have stolen only to the amount of a

morsel or a fragment which does not belong to you, God will look upon your hands and see them to be unclean. The defilement of the thing stolen sticks to them; and He beholding it will turn in indignation from your prayers and your offering.

The next plea we propose to your attention is, that the master out of whose stock we have purloined is rich—he will not miss it, and it can do him no harm. Still making additions of their own you observe to the law of God. Still doing as the Pharisees did before them—making the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions, and teaching for doctrines the commandments and inventions of men. God says thou shalt not steal. He does not say thou shalt not steal from the poor, leaving us at liberty to steal from the rich whenever we have opportunity. The distinction betwixt rich and poor in this matter is a distinction of their own. By making this plea they not only disobey God; but they insult Him by offering to mend His law, and bringing forward what they think a better one of their own. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall not pass away. And that word is—let him that stole steal no more. There is no allusion to rich or poor in this injunction. Nay in the text it is stealing from the rich that is expressly forbidden. The poor, generally speaking, are the servants; and the rich, generally speaking, are the masters—and servants are ordered not to purloin from their masters, but to show all good fidelity. No there is nothing for it, but an entire separation from this unclean and accursed practice. It is an express

violation of God's law; and admits of no plea, no palliation. It is a dangerous experiment to trifle with sin, and to venture upon what we are pleased to think the lesser shades and degrees of it. The moment that sin is committed even in the very least degrees of it, the fence which separates obedience from rebellion is broken down. After we have got over that fence, there is no saying how far we may go. After a garden wall is once leaped, it is not doing much more to enter its most precious depositaries, and spoil it of its fairest and richest productions. And here we may repeat, by the way, that the first sin ever committed by man forms a striking refutation of the two pleas which we are now attempting to expose. The thing stolen was a fruit. The master he stole it from was the Lord of Heaven and of Earth—to whom belongs the cattle on a thousand hills, and who sits surrounded with the wealth of innumerable worlds. What becomes of the smallness of the sin now? It was just this sin which banished Adam from paradise, which broke up the communion between earth and heaven—which entailed ruin on a whole species of moral and intelligent creatures. The infidel laughs at the story, and with all the parade of an enlightened wisdom he counts it ridiculous—he thinks how paltry the offence—and how big the mischief and the ruin which are stated to have sprung from it. But he only betrays the grossness of a mind, which cannot rise above the estimates and the calculations of an ordinary man—which looks no further than to the visible performance, and is blind to the only principle which gives to

the performance its moral character. It is not in the magnitude of the thing done, that the chief magnitude of the offence lies. It is the state of mind implied by the doing of it. Had Adam rooted out every tree of paradise and dismantled the garden of all its beauties—we might have thought that his offence lay in the material extent of the injury that was done by him. But Adam did no more than steal a forbidden fruit; and, for any evil performed by his hand, Eden might have remained in all its bloom and in all its loveliness. But in proportion as the material hurt was small, is the grandeur and the entireness of the moral lesson conveyed by it. It leads our single eye to the foulness of that turpitude which lies in disobedience to God. The thing done was small in itself—but it carried rebellion in its principle. Thus saith the Lord, was the sanction which lay upon it—and that sanction was trampled upon. When God said Let there be light and there was light—we look upon this as a sublime and wonderful evidence of His power. When God said In the day he eateth he shall die, and he did eat, and from that moment a cloud of malignant darkness gathered upon the head of the offender, and hangs to this hour over his distant posterity—we look upon this as an evidence no less sublime of His truth and of His righteousness. The simplicity of the visible act enables us to see the spiritual character of this great transaction in all its majesty—nor can the senseless levities we have heard on the subject of Adam's fall, keep us from viewing it as one in dignity with the other events of that wonderful

period, when the Almighty had spread a new creation around him, and displayed the attributes of His high and unchangeable nature among the beings whom He had formed.

Take this lesson to yourselves, ye purloiners, who are going on decciving your consciences, and heaping ruin and condemnation upon your deluded souls. You think the thing purloined is so very small, and the master you stole it from is so very rich. But what right have you to set your thinkings and your excusings, against the awful authority of "Thus saith the Lord"? It is no matter how small the theft. It is no matter how rich the man who suffers by it. God's authority is trampled upon by the act. His Holy Bible is despised. His judgment is bid defiance to—and the saying of the Apostle Paul is as much slighted and undervalued as if no Apostle had ever said it, that thieves shall not inherit the kingdom of God. O, if any of you have been hitherto deceived upon this subject, suffer now the word of exhortation. Go not to trifle any longer with the precious interest of your souls. Resist not what we say, because it touches painfully upon your practices or your consciences. We mean no offence. We want to stir up no anger among you. We bring forward no railing accusation. It is the general and unceasing importance of the subject which has led us to fix upon it; for we give you our solemn assurance, that we know of no act of purloining committed by any one of you—nor do we have in our eye a single guilty individual. For any thing we know, there is not one of you who is not nobly superior to the

slightest taint and degree of this iniquity—and, in this case, the sole use of this sermon may be that you shall be kept clean through the word now spoken to you. But lest there should be a purloiner in this congregation, we think it our high and awfully incumbent duty, to stretch forth our hand that we may arrest and reclaim him from that road of perdition on which he is hastening—and surely you will grant us your indulgence, when we say that in doing what we have done, we have only lifted our testimony against what we honestly believe would land him in everlasting burnings if it be persisted in.

But let us now endeavour, in the third place, to press the duty which is opposed to the sin of the text, that is, good fidelity—by the motive which the text itself insists upon, that you may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let us observe, however, that the servants whom Titus was to exhort, were among the people of his own congregation. They formed a Christian commu nity; and, whatever kind of people this designation may be applied to now-a-days, it was applied in those days to men, who, in embracing the profession of the faith, formally renounced the errors or the idolatries of their former years—to men, who, in making this profession, must generally speaking have been moved to it by a real belief in the great and prominent truths of that new religion which was proposed to them: Or, in other words, the exhortation of the text is recommended by Paul to be addressed to men, who, not only embraced the profession of the faith, but had embraced

the faith—to men who felt the influence of the great doctrines of Christianity—to men who had God revealed to them in their Saviour, and knew of the grace of God that bringeth salvation, and were under that process of teaching which the grace of God is employed in carrying on, and the object of which is that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live soberly righteously and godly in this present evil world. We know well the use that has been made of these considerations. Bring, it is said, these dissuasives against their evil practices to bear upon Christian servants. Exhort those who are already in the faith; and, as to those who are not in the faith, including for any thing we know the great mass of servants who are now before us, suspend all our attacks upon their sins, till we have brought them to the Saviour—furnish them with a Christian motive, before we press them to a Christian reformation—make them the subjects of grace, by giving them that faith which has the promise of the Spirit, ere we attempt that teaching which can only be done effectually by the grace that bringeth salvation. Now, it is all very true that no obedience is pure in its principle, but that to which we are constrained by the love of God reconciled to us in Christ Jesus —no obedience is successful in its accomplishment, but that which is wrought through the strength of Him who confers power to become the children of God only on those who believe—no obedience is acceptable to the Father, but such as is offered up in the name of the Son. All this is most true—and it must be our incessant object to grow in such

obedience, by growing in the only principle which can actuate and uphold it. But recollect that there are expedients set agoing by the wisdom of God for bringing men to Christ—and there are considerations addressed to sinners for the purpose of convincing them of danger, and forcing them to flee for refuge unto Christ—and there are certain performances, which, in the very act of coming unto Christ, they are called upon to do—and, therefore it is, that, though at this moment you may be out of Christ and away from Him, we count it a seasonable topic for each and all of you, when we tell you of the exceeding sinfulness of every one sin with which you are chargeable. It is right that every kind of unrighteousness should be made manifest to your consciences—for the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness. It is right that every purloiner should be made to know what thousands and thousands more of purloiners are not aware of, that the heavy judgment of God lies upon them for that offence which they are apt to look on as so light and so common and so natural and so excusable. It is right they should be made to understand, how great the danger is, and what the place of security to flee to—and surely, the more they are burdened with a sense of the wrath of God, the more will they feel the weight and importance of the saying, that unless they believe in Christ this wrath abideth on them. And surely if Christ said at the very outset, repent and believe the Gospel—if He said, he that followeth after me must forsake all—if the grace of God at the first moment of its appearance, taught

men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts—we are not out of place when we tell the most ignorant and graceless purloiner among you, to turn him to Christ that he may obtain the forgiveness of all his misdoings; and when we tell him within the compass of the same breathing to turn him from his iniquities—that the man who keeps by his sins is in fact keeping away from the Saviour—that he is loving darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil—that he is not coming to the Saviour, for he is not doing what all who come must and will do—he is not stirring himself up in the business of forsaking all. The evil and inveterate habits of an unfaithful servant he will not forsake. He clings to them as so many idols that he cannot bring himself to part with. Christ, who claims the authority of his alone master, does not prevail upon him to give up the service of those sins which lord it over him. And it is, therefore, that he should know, how every day that he persists in this forbidden practice, he is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and putting the grace of an offered salvation and the voice of a beseeching God away from him.

Let us therefore urge it most earnestly upon you that you consider your doings. Christ is willing to receive you; and, if you are willing to come to Him, to you belongs the whole extent of His purchased salvation. But you are not willing to come to Him, if you are more willing to retain your iniquities; and in these iniquities you will die. Sell your goods to feed the poor, says our Saviour to the young man in the Gospel, and then come

and follow me; but he would not come to Him upon these terms, and his devotedness to his wealth was the bar that stood in his way to the kingdom of God. In like manner we call upon you purloiners to cleanse your hands and come to the Saviour. If you will not come upon these terms, the rich man had his bar in the way of salvation, and you have yours. He would not give up his property, and you will not give up the produce of your petty pilferments. You are not willing to come to Christ that you may have life—for, sweet as is the life which is at his giving, it is not so sweet to your taste, as is the sweetness of those stolen waters which have hitherto been your secret and your habitual enjoyment. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and he is therefore called the profane Esau. How much more profane are you, who are putting the offer of a birthright in heaven away from you—and for what?—for the crumbs and fragments of your paltry depredations. From this moment we charge you to touch them no more. Bid your hand cease from its pilferments; and compel it to your bidding. If what we have said tell upon your conscience, this very night will it tell upon your conduct. To-morrow comes, and it will find you a reforming man—earnest how to find your salvation, and busy to frame your doings that you may turn unto the Lord. You will get up from the bed of reflection, with the purpose of keeping yourself clear and aloof from your wonted dishonesties; and, with a prayer that you may be strengthened in the execution of this purpose. Till we see something of this kind, we see no evi-

dence of your yet having taken a single step to the Saviour. Keep by the purloinings against which we have been charging you; and you are not so much as moving towards Christ, nor will you ever reach Him. Cease then from them at this moment—do this in the very act of going to the Saviour and seeking after him; and who knows but this first and foremost of your visible reformations, humble as it is when compared with the accomplishments of him who stands perfect and complete in the whole will of God, who knows but it may betoken the commencement of a good work in your soul?—that awakening of the sinner's eye on which Christ has promised that he shall give light—the outset of that path which conducts from one degree of grace unto another, till you reach the stature of the full grown Christian—an earlier stage of the journey which conducts him who cometh unto Christ to all His promised manifestations, that, made to shine upon your head will make you rejoice more and more in the perfections of His righteousness, in the fulness of His grace and the freeness of His kind invitations, in the sureness of those never-failing supplies out of which you are strengthened with all might in the inner man, and enabled to do all things through the spirit which is given unto you.

We now proceed to the motive which Paul urged upon the servants he was addressing—that they might adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. We think that two very distinct, and, at the same time very affecting and important lessons, may be drawn from this single clause of

the verse now before us. The first is that a man's Christianity might be made to show itself throughout the whole business of his vocation, whatever it may be—that it may be made to give a pervading expression to his whole history—that it might accompany and be at work with him throughout every doing and every exercise he can put his hand to—that, in a word, the influence of its spirit is a perennial influence, ever present in the heart, and ever sending forth a powerful and a perpetual control over the conduct. It is not merely in one thing, or in another thing, that the doctrine of Christ is capable of being adorned. It admits of being adorned in all things. Doctrine sometimes signifies the thing taught; and it sometimes signifies the process of teaching. We understand it more in the latter sense on the present occasion. Show how excellent, and how purifying, and how universal, in point of salutary influence, this teaching is. Show how completely it goes over the whole round of human performances. Show with what a comprehensive eye, it surveys the map of human life, and stamps its own colour and gives its own outline to its most remote and subordinate provinces. Let the world see, that wherever a man of Christian doctrine is present, and whatever the employment be that he is engaged with, there at all times goes along with him a living exhibition of the power and the efficacy of Christian doctrine; that he represents by every one action the character of the gospel which he professes; that the stamp of its morality may be recognised on his every distinct and separate per-

formance; and that others may say of each and of all his doings, that this is done in the style and manner of a Christian.

When a man becomes Christian, what we would ask is the most visible expression of the change which has taken effect upon him? We are not speaking of the change in its essential character, which is neither more nor less than a thorough and aspiring devotedness to the will of that God whom he now sees by the eye of faith to be reconciled to him through the blood of an everlasting covenant. The question we are putting relates to the seen effect of this principle upon the man's outward habits and performances; and we ask which is the most notable and conspicuous effect, and such as will most readily arrest the eye and the observation of acquaintances? We know well what the general impression of the world is upon this subject. They think when a man undergoes that mysterious and unaccountable thing which is called conversion; the most palpable transformation it makes upon him is to turn him into a psalm-singing, a church-going, an ordinance-keeping, and a prayer-making Christian. They positively do not look for such a change on the common and week-day history of this said convert, as they do on the style and character of his sabbath observations. But yet there is a something that they will look for on week days too. They will look for a more decided aspect of sobriety. They will look for a more demure and melancholy seclusion from his old acquaintances. They will look for a clear and total renunciation of all that is intemperate, and of all that is licentious. They

will look for a final adieu from those habits of intoxication, or those habits of profligacy, or those habits of companionable indulgence, to which the young of every great city are introduced with a facility and a readiness so alarming to the heart of every Christian parent; and in the prosecution of which they widen by every day of thoughtlessness their departure from God; and accumulate upon them the burden of his righteous indignation; and lull their consciences into such a slumber, as to thousands and thousands more will at length sink and deepen into the sleep of death; and bring the whole power of their example to bear upon the simple and the uninitiated. And thus does the tide of corruption maintain its unabated force and fulness from one period to another; and is strengthened by yearly contributions out of the wreck of youthful integrity; and, did not the cheering light of prophecy assure us that through the omnipotence of a pure gospel better days of reformation and of virtue were to come, one would almost sit down in despair of ever making head against such a torrent of combination and of example on the side of profligacy. Nor is this despair much alleviated, though some solitary case of repentance out of a hundred should now and then be offering itself to our contemplations; and conscience should again lift its commanding voice within him, and be reinstated in that authority which she had lost; and he, breaking off his sins by righteousness, should by an act of simple and determined abandonment brave the mockery of all his associates, and betake himself to the paths of peace and of prayer and of piety.

Now, the all things of our text should lead an enlightened disciple to look for more evidence than this; and should lead a decided convert to exhibit more evidence than this. The man who adorns the gospel in all things, will most certainly be and do all that we have heretofore insisted on. But we regret that it should be so much the impression of the world, and so much the impression even of our plausible and well-looking professors, that these form outward marks of such prominency as to throw all other outward marks into the shade; and to draw an almost exclusive regard towards sobriety of manners, and sobriety of external observation, as forming the great and leading evidences of a now acquired Christianity. Now think, what prodigious effect it would give to the gospel, what an impressive testimony to its worth and excellence it would spread around the walk of every professor of it—did all that was undeviating in truth, all that was generous in friendship, all that was manly in principle, all that was untainted in honour, all that was winning in gentleness, all that was endearing in the graces and virtues of domestic society, all that was beneficent in public life, and all that was amiable in the unnoticed recesses of private history—did all these form into one beauteous corona of virtues and accomplishments, which might shed the lustre of Christianity over every field that is traversed by a professor of Christianity. The name of a convert is at all times most readily associated with sobriety and sabbath-keeping. We should like that the conduct of the professors were such as to establish a still wider association. And if it is not, it is

because professors have so woefully neglected the principle of our text. It is because they have made their Christianity one thing, and their civil business another. It is because they have separated religion from humanity, and missed a truth of most obvious and most commanding evidence—that there is not so much as a single half hour in the whole current of a man's history, which the gospel might not cheer by its comforts, or guide by its rules, or enlighten by its informations and its principles. Had every professing convert proceeded upon this, the association would have gone much farther than it has actually done. It would have thrown a kind of universal emblazonment over the very name of Christianity. A man under the teaching of Jesus Christ could not be spoken of, without lighting up in the heart every feeling of confidence and affection and esteem. And only conceive how it would go to augment the power of this living and efficient testimony—did every man who plies his attendance upon church, and runs after sacraments, and whose element is to be hearing and talking of sermons, and the whole style of whose family regulation wears a complexion of sacredness —how it would tell with all the omnipotence of a charm upon the world, could we only have it to say of every such man—that the soul of honour and integrity animated all his doings—that his every word and his every bargain were immutable—that not so much as a flaw or the semblance of an impeachment ever rested on any of his transactions —that if in business, you might repose upon him—that if in company, you had nothing to fear from

his pride or his severity or his selfishness—that if in the relations of neighbourhood, you might look for nothing from his hands but kindness and civility—that if in the officialities of public employment, you might see all the faithfulness of a man who felt the weight of duty and responsibility that were attached to it—that if the head of a family, you might behold the happiest attemperament of wisdom and of gentleness—and finally, that if in service, you might commit to him the keepership of your all; you might give your suspicions and your jealousies to the wind; and, trusting to a fidelity which no opportunity can tempt, and no power of concealment can make to swerve from the line of honesty, you might review the whole subject of his guardianship, and find how to its minutest particle that all was untouched and all was unviolated.

This conducts us to the second lesson, which we proposed to draw from the clause of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. And that is that it is in the power of men and women, in the most obscure and unnoticed ranks of society, to do a thing of far greater magnificence and glory, than can be done by all the resources of a monarch, by all the commanding influence of wealth, by all the talents and the faculties of genius, by all the magic of utterance pouring forth its streams of eloquent and persuasive reasoning, by all grandeur and all nobility and all official consequence when disjoined from Christian principle. Humble as ye are ye servants, there is a something ye can do which has all the greatness and all the effect of eternity stamped upon it. There is a something

ye can do which the King of Glory may put down as done unto Him, and by which ye can both magnify the name and carry forward the interests of the Sun of Righteousness. There is a something ye can do by which ye may be admitted into the high honour of being fellow workers with God—by which He to whom all power is committed both in heaven and earth, will own you as the auxiliaries of His cause—by which ye may become the instruments of adding to the triumphs of the great Redeemer, and holding up His name to the world with the splendour of an augmented reputation. O think what a distinction the once-crucified but now exalted Saviour has conferred upon you. He has laid the burden of His honour and of His cause upon your shoulders. He has committed to you the task of adorning His doctrine. He has ennobled your every employment, by telling you that out of them all there may arise the moral lustre of such a principle and such a quality, as will reflect a credit upon Himself. And He who has done so much to exalt the station of a servant by taking the form of one on His own person, and by rendering under it such a service to Him who sitteth on the throne, as to have purchased for a sinful world all the securities and all the hopes and all the triumphs of their redemption, comes back upon you servants, now that he is exalted to the right hand of the most High, and tells you how much he looks to you for the glories of His interest and of His name—how much He rests upon you for the illustration and the honour of His doctrine in the world. And as it was the work of the Son of God, when

veiled in the humiliation of a servant, which set on foot the great plan of the world's restoration—so is it still to the work of servants, to you my humbler brethren, the glories of whose immortal nature lie buried only for a few little years under the meanness and the drudgeries of your daily employment—it is to you that He confides the helping forward of this mighty achievement, and the maintaining of its influence and of its glory from generation to generation.

It is in His name that we address you. We tell you, ye men-servants and ye maid-servants, from the sincerity of a heart that is most thoroughly penetrated with the truth and the importance of what we are now uttering, that you can do more for Christ in your respective families than we can possibly accomplish. We know not who your masters and your mistresses are. But we know that there may be masters who scowl disdainfully on the business of the priesthood. We know that with the insolence of wealth, there may be some who despise the preaching of the cross, and make holiday of our sabbaths and our sacraments. We know that there may be some who come not here to have the doctrine of God our Saviour preached to them; and therefore it is that we want you to do this business for us. You may do it in effect without the utterance of a single word on the subject of Christianity. You may do it by the living power of your example. You may do it by the impressive exhibition of a fidelity which no temptation can seduce, and no lure of gain can cause to swerve from the line of a strict and undeviating

integrity. You may do it by a lesson of greater energy than all that human argument can press, or the magic of human eloquence can insinuate. You may let them see in the whole of your history, that the man among all their dependents who is most devoted to the service of the sanctuary, is also the most devoted to the service of his employer; and the most tender of all his interests; and the most observant of all his will. You may preach them a daily sermon by the daily exhibition of your faithfulness, and your attachment, and that deep and duteous spirit of loyalty, which, with all the firm footing of a religious principle in your heart, leads you to be careful of all the trust he has committed to you, and mindful of all his orders, and ever ready to meet his every wish and his every lawful imposition by the alacrity of your most assiduous and devoted ministrations. The kingdom of God is not in word but in power. And even though your master should listen to the every demonstration which issues from the pulpit, he may retire day after day with a charmed ear and an unawakened conscience, and the whole of the preacher's eloquence may die away from his memory like the sound of a pleasant song. But you keep by him through the week, and a grateful sense of your value is ever forcing itself upon his convictions. And the inference that Christianity has a something of reality in its nature, may at times intrude itself among the multitude of his other thoughts and his other avocations. And his conscience may be arrested by the interesting visitation of such an idea. And that spirit whom

we call you to pray for on his behalf, may reward your example and your supplications by pressing the idea home, and pursuing him with its resistless influence, and opening through its power such an avenue to his heart, as may at length carry before it the whole of his desires and of his purposes. And in like manner as Christianity found its way into the household of Cesar—so may you, my humbler brethren, find out a way for it into the houses of the wealthiest of our citizens; and be the instruments of spreading it around among all those villas of magnificence, which skirt and which adorn the city of our habitation; and to you, clothed as ye are in the habiliments of servitude, and weighed down from morning to night by its drudgeries, and veiled as the greatness of your immortal aspirations is from the eye of the world—even upon you may this blessing in all its richness be realized, that as ye have turned men unto righteousness so shall ye shine as the stars for ever and ever.

When we think of the lower orders of society, we cannot but think along with it, how high and how noble is the Gospel estimate of that importance which belongs to them. Each of them carries in his bosom a principle of deathless energy, never to be extinguished. Each of them has a career of ambition opened up, lofty as heaven and splendid as a crown of immortality. Each of them has an open way to Him who sitteth on the throne, through the mediation of Him who sitteth on the right hand of it. To them belongs the memorable distinction conferred by this utterance of the Eternal Son—that unto the poor the Gospel is preached. Each of

them possesses a heart that may be regenerated by the influences of the Spirit; and may be filled with all that is pure and all that is elevated in piety; and may be turned into a residence for the finest and the loftiest emotions; and that, under the power of an evangelical culture, may be made to exemplify all that is respectable in worth, and all that is endearing in the nobler graces of Christianity. When worth and greatness meet in one imposing combination, there is a something in a spectacle so rare which draws the general eye of admiration along with it. But to the moral taste of some, and we profess ourselves to be of that number—there is a something still more touching, still more attractive, still more fitted to draw the eye of philanthropy and to fill it with the images of beauty and peacefulness, in what we should call the virtues and the respectabilities of humble life—as a pious father, in the midst of a revering family—or the duteous offspring who rise around him, and are taught by his example to keep the Sabbaths of the Lord and to love His ordinances—or the well-ordered household, the members of which are trained to all the decencies of Christian conduct—or the frail and lowly tenement, where the voice of psalms is heard with the return of every evening, and the morning of the hallowed day collects all its inmates around the altar of domestic prayer. When such pictures as these occur in humble life, and sure we are that humble life is capable of affording them, who could think of withholding from them his testimony of readiest admiration? The man who, without any superiority of wealth

whatever, has, by the pure force of character, gained a moral ascendency over the population of his obscure neighbourhood, causes all earthly distinctions to vanish into insignificance before him. Now we affirm that in the very poorest and most unnoticed walks of society, such men are to be found; that by the powerful application of Christian motives such men may be multiplied; that there exist throughout the wide mass of society all the imaginable capabilities of worth and excellence and principle and piety; that on the spacious field of a mighty harvest which is on every side of us, there may be raised a whole multitude of converts in whose hearts the principle of the Gospel shall have taken up its firm possession, and over the visible path of whose history the power of the Gospel may shed the lustre of some of the best and finest accomplishments by which our nature can be adorned.

We must not however pursue this speculation any farther. It is in the power of the servants who now hear us, to turn it into a reality. We look to them for the vindication of all we have uttered; and sure we are, that a faithful and an attached servant; one who would maintain unseduced integrity, in the midst of manifold temptations; on whom the struggling force of principle would achieve a victory over the lure of every opportunity, and the certainty of every concealment; who, nobly superior to all that is sordid and sneaking and artful, would protect his master's interest as his own, and disdain to touch a single farthing of what was committed to him—why, we should

never think of the rank of such a man—we should call him the champion of his order, and feel how honourably he had represented his own class of society—how he had asserted all their honours, and shown how elevation of soul and of sentiment belonged as essentially to them as to the wealthiest and most distinguished of the land—how he had evinced the wondrous capabilities of principle and of improvement which had existed over the wide mass of the population. And, taking him as a specimen, that the whole face of the community might be turned into a moral garden; and that, in point of moral and spiritual importance, the poor, the despised, the unnoticed, the neglected poor, are to the full equal with all that was most lofty in the rank, and all that was most splendid in the literature of society.

We dismiss you, my friends, with the remark—that this is no speculation of ours. It is the call of the Saviour who died for you. It is He who, now that he has achieved your redemption, condescends to ask a favour of you. He commits to you the adornment of his doctrine in the eyes of the world. And remember that when you leave this church, and betake yourselves to the familiarities of your daily employment, though our eye cannot follow you, the eye of your Master in heaven is never away from you. He takes an interest in all your doings. He registers the every hour and performance of your history. If you suffer not this reflection to tell upon your conduct from this moment, you are throwing the gauntlet of defiance to a beseeching and a commanding Saviour But

if otherwise, He will not despise the humble offering of your obedience. He will put it down as done unto Him. He will recognise you as fellow-helpers to his cause and to his interest in the world. He will accept of your prayers, because they are the prayers of them whose hands are clean and whose hearts are purged from their regard to all iniquity. You will grow in friendly and familiar intercourse with the great Mediator; and He will put down the very smallest items of your obedience as fruits of the love that you bear Him, and of the faith which worketh by love and which keepeth the commandments.

DISCOURSE XV.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT TO SOCIETY.

"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."—ROMANS iii. 9—19.

THERE are certain of these charges which can be brought more simply and speedily home in the way of conviction than certain others of them. Those which bring man more directly before the tribunal of God, can be made out more easily than those which bring him before the tribunal of his fellows. It were difficult to prove, that, in reference to man, there are not some of the species who have not something to glory of; but it should not be so difficult to prove, that we have nothing to glory of before God. Now, the conclusion of the Apostle's argument in this passage is, that it is before God

that all the world is guilty; and if we, in the first instance, single out those verses which place man before us in his simple relationship to the God who formed him, we ought not to find it a hard matter to carry the acquiescence of our hearers in the sentence which is here pronounced upon our guilty species.

One of those verses is, that "there is none righteous, no, not one." To be held as having righteously kept the law of our country, we must keep the whole of it. It is not necessary that we accumulate upon our persons the guilt of treason, and forgery, and murder, and violent depredation, ere we forfeit our lives to an outraged government. By one of these acts we incur just as dreadful and as entire a forfeiture as though guilty of them all. The hundred deeds of obedience will not efface or expiate the one of disobedience; and we have only to plead for the same justice to a divine that we render to a human administration, in order to convince every individual who now hears us, conscious, as he must be, of one, and several, and many acts of transgression against the law of God, that there is not one of them who is righteous before him.

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God," is another of these verses. We will venture to say of every man, without exception, who has not submitted himself to the great doctrine of this epistle, which is justification by faith, that there is not one principle clearly intelligible even to his own mind, on which he rests his acceptance with the God whom he has

offended. He may have some obscure conception of His mercy, but he has never struck the compromise between His mercy and His justice. He has never braved the inquiry, how is it possible that a sinner can be pardoned without a dissolution of God's moral government? If he has ever taken up the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" he has never, in the prosecution of it, looked steadily in the face at the Truth and Holiness of the Godhead. He has never extricated his condition as a sinner, from the dilemma of God's conflicting attributes; or apprehended, to his own satisfaction, how it is that the dignity of Heaven's throne can be upheld, amid the approaches of the polluted, who dare the inspection of eternal purity, and offer to come nigh, on the single presumption of God's connivance at sin,—and a connivance founded too on the vague impression of God's simple, and easy, and unresisting tenderness. What becomes of all that which stamps authority upon a law, and props the majesty of a Lawgiver, is a question that they have not resolved; and that just because it is a question which they do not entertain. They are not seeking to resolve it. That matter which appertains to the very essence of a sinner's salvation, is a matter of which they have no understanding; and they do not care to understand it. They are otherwise taken up, and giving themselves no uneasiness upon the subject. They, all their lives long, are blinking, and evading the questions which lie at the very turning point of that transition by which a sinner passes from a state of wrath into a state of acceptance. They hold the whole of this

matter in abeyance; and the things of the world engross, and interest, and occupy, their whole hearts, to the utter exclusion of Him who made the world. They are seeking after many things, but they are not seeking after God.—If you think that this is bearing too hard upon you, tell us what have been the times, and what the occasions, on which you have ever made the finding of God the distinct and the business object of your endeavours? When did you ever seek Him truly? When did your efforts in this way ever go beyond the spirit and the character of an empty round of observations? What are the strenuous attempts you ever made to push the barrier which intercepts the guilty from the God whom they have rebelled against? If you are really and heartily seeking, you will find; but, without the fear of refutation, do we affirm of all here present who have not reached the Saviour, and are not in their way to Him, that none of you understandeth, and none of you seeketh after God.

"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good; no, not one,"—is another of these verses. We do not say of the people whom we are now addressing, that they have gone out of the way of honour, or out of the way of equity, or out of the way of fair, and pleasant, and companionable neighbourhood. But they, one and all of them, are out of the way of godliness. When the Prophet complains of our species, he does not affirm of them that they had turned every one to a way either of injustice or cruelty; but he counts

it condemnation enough, that they had turned every one *to his own* way. It is iniquity enough in his eyes that the way in which we walk is our own way, and not God's; that in the prosecution of it we are simply pleasing ourselves, and not asking or caring whether it be a way that is pleasing to Him; that the impelling principle of what we do is our own will, and not His authority; that the way in which we walk is a way of independence upon God, if not of iniquity against our fellows in society; that it is the way of one who walks in the sight of his own eyes, and not of one who walks under the sight and in the service of another; that God, in fact, is as good as cast off from us; and we say what is tantamount to this, that we will not have Him to reign over us. This is the universal habit of Nature; and if so, Nature is out of the way, and the world at large offers a monstrous exception to the habit of the sinless and unfallen, where all from the highest to the lowest, walk in that rightful subordination which the thing that is formed should ever have towards Him who formed it. It is this which renders all the works of mere natural men so unprofitable, that is, of no value in the high count and reckoning of eternity. They want the great moral infusion which makes them valuable. There is nothing of God in them; having neither His will for their principle, nor the advancement of any one cause which His heart is set upon for their object. They may serve a temporary purpose. They may shed a blessing over the scenery of our mortal existence. They may minister to the good, and the peace, and the protec-

tion of society. They may add to the sunshine or the serenity of our little day upon earth; and yet be unprofitable, because they yield no fruit unto immortality. Destitute as they all are of godliness, they are destitute of goodness. They have not the essential spirit of this attribute pervading them. And though many there are to whom the preaching of the cross is foolishness, and who have reached a lofty estimation in the walks of integrity and honour, and even of philanthropy and patriotism, yet, with the taint of earthliness which vitiates all they do, in the estimation of Heaven's Sanctuary there is none of them that doeth good; no, not one.

We now pass onward to another set of charges, which it may not be so easy to substantiate on the ground of actual observation. They consist of highly atrocious offences against the peace and the dearest interests of society. It is true, that the apostle here drops the style of universality which he so firmly sustains in the foregoing part of his arraignment, when he speaks of all being out of the way; and of none, no, not one, being to be found on the path of godliness. And it is further true, that, in the subsequent prosecution of his charges, he quotes several expressions which David made use of, not against the whole species, but against his own enemies. But yet it will be found, that though the picture of atrocity here drawn may not in our day be so broadly exhibited as in the ruder and more barbarous periods of this world's history, yet, that the principles of it are still busily at work; that though humanity be altered a little in its guise, it is not, apart from the gospel, at all

altered in its substance; that though softened down into a somewhat milder complexion, its fiercer elements are not therefore extinguished, but only lie for a time in a sort of slumbering concealment; that though law and civilization, and a more enlightened sense of interest, may have stopped the mouth of many a desolating volcano, which would else have marred and wasted the face of society, yet do the fiery materials still exist in the bosom of society. It is religion alone which will kill the elementary principles of human wickedness, and every expedient short of religion will do no more than restrain the ebullition of them. So that, dark as the scriptural representation of our nature is; and though here personified by the Apostle into a monster, whose delight is in the most foul and revolting abominations; with a throat like an open sepulchre, emitting contempt, and hatred, and envy, and every thing offensive; and a tongue practised in the arts of deceitfulness; and lips from which the gall of malignity ever drops in unceasing distillation; and a mouth full of venomous asperity; and feet that run to assassination as a game; and with the pathway on which she runs marked by the ruin and distress that attend upon her progress; and with a disdainful aversion in her heart to the safety and inglorious-ness of peace; and, finally, with an aspect of defiance to the God that called her into being, and gave all her parts and all her energies—though this sketch of our nature was originally taken by the Psalmist from the prowling banditti that hovered on the confines of Judea, yet has the Apostle, by admitting it into his argument, stamped a perpetuity

upon it, and made it universal,—giving us to understand, that if such was the character of man, as it stood nakedly out among the rude and resentful hostilities of a barbarous people, such also is the real character of man among the glosses, and the regularities, and the monotonous decencies of modern society.

There is one short illustration which may help you to comprehend this. You know that oaths were more frequent at one time than they are now in the conversation of the higher classes, and that at present it is altogether a point of politeness to abstain from the utterance of them. It is a point of politeness, we fear, more than a point of piety. There may be less of profaneness in their mouths, while there may be as much as ever in their hearts; and when the question is between God and man, and with a view to rate the godliness of the latter, do you think that this is at all alleviated by a mere revolution of taste about the proprieties of fashionable intercourse? There may be as little of religion in the discontinuance of swearing, when that is brought about by a mere fluctuation in the mode or *bon ton* of society, as there is of religion in the adoption of a new dress, or a new style of entertainment. And, in like manner, murder in the act may be less frequent now, while, if he who hateth his brother be a murderer, it may be fully as foul and frequent in the principle; and theft, in the shape of violent and open depredation, be no longer practised by him who gives vent to an equal degree of dishonesty through the chicaneries of merchandise; and that malice which wont in other

times to pour itself forth in resentful outcry, or vulgar execration, may now find its sweet and secret gratification in the conquests of a refined policy; and thus may there lurk under the soft and placid disguises of well-bred citizenship, just as much of unfeeling deceit, and unfeeling cruelty, as were ever realized in the fiercer contests of savage warfare, so as to verify the estimate of our apostle, even when applied to the character of society in modern days, and to make it as evident with the duties of the second table as it is with the first, that in every thing man has wandered far from the path of rectitude, and in every thing has fallen short of the glory of God.

The truth is, there is much in the whole guise of modern society that is fitted to hide from human eyes the real deformity of the human character. We think that, apart from Christianity, the falsehood and the ferocity of our species are essentially the same with what they were in the most unsettled periods of its history—that, however moulded into a different form, they retain all the strength and substance that they ever had—and that, if certain restraints were lifted away, certain regulations which have their hold not upon the principle, but upon the selfishness of our nature; then would the latent propensities of man again break forth into open exhibition, and betray him to be the same guileful, and rapacious, and vindictive creature he has ever shown himself to be, in those places of the earth where government had not yet introduced its restraints, and civilization had not yet introduced its disguises.

And even when society has sat down into the form of a peaceful and well-ordered commonwealth, will it be seen that the evil of the human heart, though it come not forth so broadly and so outrageously as before, is just as active in its workings, and just as unsubdued in its principle as ever. We apprehend that man to be mainly ignorant of life, and to be unpractised or untaught among the collisions of human intercourse, who is not aware that even among our politest circles, smoothed as they may be into perfect decorum, and graced by the smile of soft and sentimental courtesy, there may lurk all the asperities and heart-burnings so honestly set forth by our Apostle; and that even there the artful malignity of human passion finds, in slanderous insinuations, and the devices of a keen and dexterous rivalry, its effectual vent for them. And little has he experienced of the trick and treachery of business, who thinks that, in the scramble of its eager competitions, less deceit is now used with the tongue, than in the days when the Psalmist was compassed round with the snares of his adversaries. And slightely has he reflected on the true character, that often beams out from beneath the specious fallacy which lies over it, who does not perceive that there may, even with law, be as determined a spirit of injustice, among the frauds and the forms of bankruptcy, as that which in the olden time, and without law, carried violence and rapine into a neighbour's habitation. And there is a lack of insight with him who thinks, that in civilized war, with all its gallant courtesies, and all its manifestos of humane and righteous protestation, there may not be the same

kindling for the fray, and the same appetite for blood, that gives its fell and revengeful sweep to the tomahawk of Indians. There is another dress and another exterior upon society than before; but be assured, that in so far as it respects the essentials of human character the representation of the Apostle is still the true one. Whatever were the deceitful, or whatever were the murderous propensities of man, three thousand years ago, they have descended to our present generation; and we are not sure but that, through the regular vents of war, and of bankruptcy, there is as full scope for their indulgence as ever. There may be a change in the mode of these iniquities, without any change at all in the matter of them; and after all that police, and refinement, and the kindly operation of long pacific intercourse, have done to humanize the aspect of these latter days, we are far from sure whether upon the displacement of certain guards and barriers of security, the slumbering ferocities of man might not again announce their existence, and break out, as before, into open and declared violence.

All this, while it gives a most humiliating estimate of our species, should serve to enhance to our minds the blessings of regular Government. And it were curious to question the agents of police upon this subject, the men who are stationed at the place of combat and of guardianship, with those who have cast off the fear of God, and cast off also the fear of man to such a degree, as to be ever venturing across the margin of human legality. Let the most observant of all these public functionaries simply depone to the effect it would have, even

upon our mild and modern society, were this guardianship dissolved. Would it not be evident to him, and is it not equally evident to you all, that the artificial gloss which now overspreads the face of it would speedily be dissipated; and that, underneath, would the character of man be sure to stand out in far nearer resemblance to that sketch, however repulsive, which the inspired writer has here offered of our species? Were anarchy the order of our day, and the lawless propensities of man permitted to stalk abroad in this the season of their wild emancipation; were all the restraints of order driven in, and human strength and human fierceness were to ride in triumph over the prostrate authorities of the land; were the reigning will of our country, at this moment, the will of a spontaneous multitude, doing every man of them, in rude and random ebullitions, what was right in his own eyes; with just such a fear of our heavenly superior as now exists in the world, but with all fear and reverence for earthly superiors taken away from it; let us just ask you to conceive the effect of such a state of things, and then to compute how little there is of moral, and how much there is of mere animal restraint in the apparent virtues of human society. There is a twofold benefit in such a contemplation. It will enhance to every Christian mind the cause of loyalty, and lead him to regard the power that is, as the minister of God to him for good And it will also guide him through many delusions to appreciate justly the character of man; to distinguish aright between the semblance of principle and its reality; and to gather, from the surveys of experience, a

fresh evidence for the truth of those Scriptures, which speak so truly of human sinfulness, and point out so clearly the way of human salvation.

But it is not necessary, for the purpose of identifying the character of man, as it now is, with what the character of man was, in its worst features, in the days of the Royal Psalmist, to make out by evidence a positive thirst after blood on the part of any existing class in society. We are not sure that it was any native or abstract delight in cruelty which prompted the marauders of other days to deeds of violence. Place a man in circumstances of ease and of self-complacency, and he will revolt from the infliction of unnecessary pain, just as the gorged and satiated animal of prey will suffer the traveller to pass without molestation. It forms no part of our indictment against the species, that his appetite for blood urges him onwards to barbarity, but that his appetite for other things will urge him on to it; and that if, while he had these things, he would rather abstain from the death of his fellow-men, yet, rather than want these things, he would inflict it. It is not that his love of cruelty is the originating appetite which carries him forward to deeds of cruelty, but that his abhorrence of cruelty is not enough to arrest the force of other appetites, when they find that human life lies in the way of their gratification. The feet of the borderers of Judea made haste to shed blood; but, just because, like the borderers of our own land, their love of booty could only be indulged with human resistance among human habitations. And were these days of public licentiousness again to return—were

the functions of government suspended, and the only guarantee of peace and of property were the native rectitude of the species—did the power of anarchy achieve its own darling object of a jubilee all over the country for human wilfulness; and in this way were, not the past inclinations revived, but just the present inclinations of man let loose upon society—a single month would not elapse, ere scenes of as dread atrocity were witnessed, as those which the Psalmist has recorded, and those which the Apostle has transmitted, as the exemplars, not of practical, but of general humanity. The latent iniquities of the human heart would reappear just as soon as the compression of human authority was lifted away from them; and these streets be made to flow with the blood of the most distinguished of our citizens; and the violence at first directed against the summit of society, would speedily cause the whole frame of it to totter into dissolution; and in this our moral and enlightened day it would be found, that there was enough of crime in the country to spread terror over all its provinces, and to hold its prostrate families in bondage; and with such a dreary interregnum of tumult, and uproar, and vagrancy, as this, would there be a page of British history as deeply crimsoned over, as are the darkest annals of the barbarity of our species—all proving, how indispensable the ordinance of human government is to the well-being of society; but also proving, that if it be the will, and the inward tendency, and the unfettered principle, which constitute the real elements of the character of man, this character has only been coloured into another hue, without

being transformed into another essence, by an ordinance which can only keep its elements in check, but never can extinguish them.

And on applying the spiritual touchstone of the gospel, may we perhaps fasten a similar charge on many in society, who never suspected it possible that they had any part in the Apostle's dark representation of our foul and fallen nature. Even in the wildest scenes of anarchy, it may not be the love of cruelty, but the love of power or of plunder, which leads men to the most revolting abominations of cruelty. It is not so much a ravenous desire after human blood, as a regardlessness about it, which stamps a savage barbarity on the characters of men. It is their regard for the objects of avarice and ambition, coupled with their regardlessness about the quantity of human life, that lies in the way of them; which is enough to account for deeds of atrocity as monstrous as ever were committed, either by bloody tyrants, or ferocious multitudes. Now, may not this regard on the one hand, and this regardlessness on the other, be fully exemplified by him who looks with delight on the splendid reversion that awaits him, and cares not how soon the death of his aged relative may bring it to his door? And may it not be exemplified by him who, all in a tumult with military glee, and the visions of military glory, longs for some arena crowded with the fellows of his own sentient nature, on which he might bring the fell implements of destruction to bear, and so signalize himself in the proud lists of chivalry or patriotism? And most striking of all, perhaps, may it not be exemplified, by the most

gentle and pacific of our citizens, who, engrossed with the single appetite of fear, and under the movements of no other regard than a regard to his own security, might listen with secret satisfaction to the tale of the many hundreds of the rebellious who had fallen—and how the sweep of fatal artillery, or the charge of victorious squadrons, told with deadly execution on the flying multitude? We are not comparing the merits of the cause of order, which are all triumphant, with those of anarchy; the inscribed ensigns of which are as hateful to every Christian eye, as ever to the Jews of old was the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet. We are merely expounding the generalities of a nature, trenched upon every side of it in deceitfulness; and where, under the gloss of many plausibilities, there lurk, unsuspected and unknown, all the rudiments of depravity; and through the intricacies of which, he who saw with the eye of inspiration could detect a permanent and universal taint, both of selfishness and of practical atheism. The picture that he has drawn will bear to be confronted with the humanity of modern, as well as of ancient days; and, though taken off at first from the ruder specimens of our kind, yet, on a narrow inspection, will it be found to be substantiated among the delicate phases of our more elegant and artificial society; so as that every mouth should be stopped, and the whole world be brought in guilty before God.

In looking to the present aspect of society, it is not easy so to manage our argument as to reach conviction among all, that all are guilty before God;

and that, unknowing of it themselves, there may be the lurking principles of what is dire in human atrocity, even under the blandest exhibitions of our familiar and every-day acquaintanceship. But, as there are degrees of guilt, and as these are more or less evident to human eyes, it would, perhaps, decide the identity of our present generation, with those of a rude and savage antiquity, could we run along the scale of actual wickedness that is before us, and fasten upon an exemplification of it so plainly and obviously detestable as to vie with all that is recorded of the villany of our species in former ages of the world. And such a one has occurred so recently, that there is not one here present who, upon the slightest allusion, will not instantly recognise it. We speak not of those who have openly spoken, and that beyond the margin of legality, against the government of our land. We speak not of those who have clamoured so loudly, and lifted so open a front of hostility to the laws, as to have brought down upon them the hand of public vengeance. We speak not even of those who, steeled to the purposes of blood, went forth to kill and to destroy, and, found with the implements of violence in their hands, are now awaiting the sentence of an earthly tribunal on the enormity into which they have fallen. But we speak to our men of deeper contrivance; to those wary and unseen counsellors who have so coolly conducted others to the brunt of a full exposure, and then retired so cautiously within the shelter of their own cowardice; those men of print and of plot, and of privacy, in whose hands the other agents of rebellion

were nothing better than slaves and simpletons; those men of skill enough for themselves, to go thus far, and no farther, and of cruelty enough for others, as to care not how many they impelled across the verge of desperation; those men who have made their own harvest of the passions of the multitude, and now skulk in their hiding places, till the storm of vengeance that is to sweep the victims of their treachery from the land of the living shall have finally blown away; those men who spoke a patriotism which they never felt, and shed their serpent tears over sufferings which never drew from their bosoms one sigh of honest tenderness. Tell us, if, out of the men who thus have trafficked in delusion, and, in pursuance of their unfeeling experiment, have entailed want and widowhood upon families, there may not as dark a picture of humanity be drawn as the Psalmist drew out of the rude materials that were around him: And, after all that civilization has done for our species, and all that smoothness of external aspect into which government has moulded the form of society; is it not evident, that upon the slightest relaxation of its authority, and the faintest prospect of its dissolution and overthrow, there is lying in reserve as much of untamed and ruthless ferocity in our land, as, if permitted to come forth, would lift an arm of bloody violence, and scatter all the cruelties of the reign of terror among its habitations? *

These are rather lengthened illustrations in which we have indulged; but who can resist the tempta-

* This Sermon was preached in 1820, after the suppression of a rebellious movement in Scotland.

tion that offers itself, when an opening is given for exhibiting the accordancy that obtains between the truths of observation, and the averments of scripture; when facts are before us, and such a use of them can be made, as that of turning them into materials by which to strengthen the foundations of orthodoxy; and when, out of scenes which rise with all the freshness of recency before us, it can be shown how the sturdy apostolic doctrine will bear to be confronted with every new display, and every new development of human experience? And, ere we have done, we should like to urge three lessons upon you, from all that has been said; the first with a view to set your theology upon its right basis; and the second with a view to set your loyalty upon its right basis; and the third with a view to impress a right practical movement on those who hold a natural or political ascendancy in our land.

I. First, then, as to the theology of this question. We trust you perceive how much it is, and how little it is, that can be gathered from the comparative peace and gentleness of modern society; how much the protection of families is due to the physical restraints that are laid on by this world's government, and how little is due to the moral restraints that are laid on by the unseen government of Heaven; how little the existing safety of our commonwealth, both from crime and turbulence, is owing to the force of any considerations which are addressed to the principle of man, and how much of it is owing to the force of such considerations as are addressed to man's fears and man's selfish-

ness;—all proving, that if human nature, in this our age, do not break forth so frequently and so outrageously into violence as in other ages that have gone by, it is only because it is shackled, and not because it is tamed. It is more like the tractableness of an animal led about by a chain, than of an animal inwardly softened into a docility and a mildness which did not formerly belong to it. It is due, without doubt, to the influence of a very strong and very salutary counteraction; but it is a counteraction that has been formed out of the interest of man, and not out of the fear of God. It is due, not to the working of that celestial machinery which bears on the spiritual part of our constitution, but to the working of another machinery most useful for the temporary purpose which it serves, yet only bearing on the material and worldly part of our constitution. On this point, observation and orthodoxy are at one; and one of the most convincing illustrations which the Apostle can derive to his own doctrine, may be taken from the testimony of those who, in the shape of legal functionaries, are ranged along that line of defence, over which humanity, with its numerous outbreakings of fraud, and rapacity, and violence, is ever passing. Let them simply aver, on their own experimental feeling, what the result would be, if all the earthly safeguards of law and of government were driven away from the rampart at which they are stationed; and they are just preaching orthodoxy to our ears, and lending us their authority to one of its articles, when they tell us, that upon such an event the whole system of social life would go

into unhingement, and that, in the wild uproar of human passions which would follow, kindness, and confidence, and equity, would take their rapid flight from human habitations.

II. But, secondly, the very same train of argument which goes to enlighten the theology of this subject, serves also to deepen and to establish within us all the principles of a most devoted loyalty. That view of the human character, upon which it is contended, by the divine, that unless it is regenerated there can be no meetness for heaven, is the very same with that view of the human character upon which it is contended, by the politician, that unless it is restrained there will be no safety from crime and violence along the course of the pilgrimage which leads to it. An enlightened Christian recognises the hand of God in all the shelter that is thrown over him from the fury of the natural elements; and he equally recognises it in all the shelter that is thrown over him from the fury of the moral elements by which he is surrounded. Had he a more favourable view of our nature, he might not look on government as so indispensable; but, with the view that he actually has, he cannot miss the conclusion of its being the ordinance of Heaven for the church's good upon earth; and that thus a canopy of defence is drawn over the heads of Zion's travellers; and they rejoice in the authority of human laws as an instrument in the hand of God for the peace of their Sabbaths, and the peace of their sacraments; and they deprecate the anarchy that would ensue from the suspension of them, with as much honest

principle, as they would deprecate the earthquake that might ingulf, or the hurricane that might sweep away their habitations; and, aware of what humanity is, when left to itself, they accept, as a boon from heaven, the mechanism which checks the effervescence of all those fires that would else go forth to burn up and to destroy.

This, at all times the feeling of every enlightened Christian, must have been eminently and peculiarly so at that time when our recent alarms were at the greatest height. It was the time of our sacrament; and, to all who love its services, must it have been matter of grateful rejoicing, that, by the favour of Him who sways the elements of Nature, and the as uncontrollable elements of human society, we were permitted to finish these services in peace; that, in that feast of love and good-will, we were not rudely assailed by the din of warlike preparation; that, ere sabbath came, the tempest of alarm, which had sounded so fearfully along the streets of our city, was hushed into the quietness of sabbath; so that, like as if in the midst of sweetest landscape, and amongst a congregation gathered out of still and solitary hamlets, and with nothing to break in upon the deep repose and tranquillity of the scene, save the voice of united praise, from an assembly of devout and revering worshippers, were we, under the protection of an arm stronger than any arm of flesh, and at the bidding of a voice more powerful than that of mighty conquerors, suffered to enjoy the pure and peaceful ordinances of our faith, with all the threats

and all the outcries of human violence kept far away from us.

It was the apprehension of many, that it might have been otherwise. And, what ought to be their enduring gratitude, when, instead of the wrath of man let loose upon our families; and a devoted city given up to the frenzy and the fierceness of a misguided population; and the maddening outcry of combatants plying against each other their instruments of destruction; and the speed of flying multitudes, when the noise of the footmen and the noise of the horsemen gave dreadful intimation of the coming slaughter; and the bursting conflagration, in various quarters, marking out where the fell emissaries of ruin were at work; and the shock, and the volley, and the agonies of dying men, telling the trembling inmates of every household, that the work of desperation had now begun upon the streets, and might speedily force its way into all the dwelling-places:—this is what that God, who has the elements of the moral world at command, might have visited on a town which has witnessed so many a guilty sabbath, and harbours within its limits the ungodliness of so many profane and alienated families—In what preciousness, then, ought that sabbath to be held; and what a boon from the kindness of long-suffering Heaven should we regard its quietness; when, instead of such deeds of vengeance between townsmen and their fellows, they walked together in peaceful society to the house of prayer, and sat in peacefulness together at its best loved ordinance.

The men who prize the value of this protection

the most, are the men who feel most the need of human government, and who most revere it as an ordinance of God. Such is their opinion of the heart, that they believe, unless it be renewed by divine grace, there can be no translation into a blessed eternity; and such is their opinion of the heart, that they believe, unless its native inclinations be repressed by human government, there can be no calm or protected passage along the track of conveyance in this world. Their loyalty emerges from their orthodoxy. With them it has all the tenacity of principle; and is far too deeply seated to be laid prostrate among the fierce and guilty agitations of the tumultuous. They have no part in the rancour of the disaffected; and they have no part in the ambitiousness of the dark and daring revolutionist; and seeking, as they do, to lead a quiet and a peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, a season of turbulence is to them a season of trial, and would be a season of difficulty, had they not the politics of the Bible to guide their way among the threats and the terrors of surrounding desperadoes. "Honour the king, and meddle not with those who are given to change," are the indelible duties of a record that is indelible; and they stamp a sacredness upon Christian loyalty. They are not at liberty to cancel what God has enacted, and to expunge what God has written. They are loyal because they are religious; to suffer in such a cause is persecution, to die in it is martyrdom.

There is a mischievous delusion on this subject. In the minds of many, and these too men of the

first influence and station in the country, there is a haunting association which still continues to mislead them, even in the face of all evidence, and of all honest and credible protestation; and in virtue of which they, to this very hour, conceive that such a religion as they call methodism, is the invariable companion of a plotting, artful, and restless democracy. This is truly unfortunate; for the thing called methodism is neither more nor less than Christianity in earnest; and yet they who so call it, have it most honestly at heart to promote the great object of a peaceful, and virtuous, and well-conditioned society; and not therefore their disposition, which is right, but their apprehension upon this topic, which is egregiously wrong, has just had the effect of bending the whole line of their patronage and policy the wrong way. And thus are they unceasingly employed in attempting to kill, as a noxious plant, the only element which can make head against the tide of irreligion and blasphemy in our land; conceiving, but most woefully wide of the truth in so conceiving, that there is a certain approving sympathy between the sanctity of the evangelical system, and the sedition that so lately has derided and profaned it. The doctrinal Christianity of this very epistle would be called methodistical by those to whom we are now alluding; but sure we are, that the disciple who goes along with Paul, while he travels in argument through the deeper mysteries of faith, will not abandon him when, in the latter chapters of his work, he breaks forth into that efflorescence of beautiful and perfect morality with which he

winds up the whole of his wondrous demonstration; but will observe the bidden conduct as a genuine emanation of the expounded creed—when told, that every soul should be subject unto the higher powers, and that there is no power but of God, and that the powers which be are ordained of God. And whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

III. We venture to affirm, that it is just the want of this Christianity in earnest which has brought our nation to the brink of an emergency so fearful as that upon which we are standing. When Solomon says, that it is righteousness which exalteth a nation, he means something of a deeper and more sacred character than the mere righteousness of society. This last may be learned in the school of classical or of civil virtue; and an argument may be gathered in its behalf even from the views of an enlightened selfishness; and, all lovely as it is in exhibition, may it draw from the tasteful admirers of what is fine in character even something more than a mere nominal acknowledgment. It may carry a certain extent of practical conformity over the real and living habits of those who, faultless in honour, and uprightness, and loyalty, are nevertheless devoid of the religious principle altogether; and who, so far from being tainted with methodism, in the sense of that definition which we have already given of it, would both repudiate its advances upon

their own family, and regret any visible inroads it might make on our general population.

That Solomon does mean something more than the virtues to wich we are now alluding, is evident we think from this circumstance. The term righteousness, admits of a social and relative application, and in this application, may introduce a conception into the mind that is exclusive of God. But the same cannot be said of the term sin. This generally suggests the idea of God as the Being sinned against. The one term does not so essentially express the idea of conformity to the divine law, as the other term expresses the idea of transgression against it. It does not carry up the mind so immediately to God; because, with the utter absence of Him from our thoughts, may it still retain a substance and a significancy, as expressive of what is held to be right in a community of human beings. It is well, then, that the clause, "Righteousness exalteth a nation," is followed up by the clause, "But sin is a reproach to any people;" and that thus the latter term, which is equivalent to ungodliness by the contrast in which it stands with the former term, leads us to the true import of the first of these two clauses, and gives us to understand Solomon as saying, that it is godliness that exalteth a nation.

Cut away the substratum of godliness, and how, we ask, will the secondary and the earth-born righteousness be found to thrive on the remaining soil which nature supplies for rearing it? It is an error to think that it will make a total withdrawment of itself from the world. It will still be found, in

straggling specimens, among some sheltered and congenial spots even of this world's territory—at times among the haunts of lettered enthusiasm; and at times on the elevated stage of a rank which stands forth to public notice, or of an opulence which is raised above the attacks of care and of temptation; and, at times, on the rarely-occurring mould of a native equity, when, in middle and comfortable life, the rude urgencies of want and of vulgar ambition do not overbear it. Even there it will grow but sparingly, without the influences of the gospel; as it did in those ages, and as it still does in those countries where the gospel is unknown. But, if you step down from those moral eminences, or if you come out from those few sweet and kindred retirements, where the moral verdure has stood, unblighted, even in the absence of Christianity, and thence go forth among the ample spaces, and the wide, and open, and general exposures of society; if, on the arena of common life, you enter the teeming families of the poor, and hold converse with the mighty host who scarcely know an interval between waking hours of drudgery and hours of sleeping unconsciousness; if, passing away from the abodes of refinement, you mingle with the many whose feelings and whose faculties are alike buffeted in the din and the dizzying of incessant labour—we mean to affix no stigma on the humbler brethren of our nature; but we may at least be suffered to say, that among the richest of fortune and acomplishment in our land, we know not the individual whose virtues, if transplanted into the unkindlier region of poverty, would have withstood

the operation of all the adverse elements to which it is exposed,—unless upheld by that very godliness which he perhaps disowns, that very methodism on which perhaps he pours the cruelty of his derision.

And here it may be remarked, how much the taste of many among the higher orders of society, is at war with the best security that can be devised for the peace and the well-being of society. There are many among them who admire the blossoms of virtue, while they dislike that only culture which can spread this lovely efflorescence over the whole field of humanity. They advert not to this—that the virtue which is cradled in the lap of abundance, and is blown into luxuriance among the complacencies of a heart at ease, would soon evince its frailty were it carried out among the exposures of an every-day world; that there it would droop and perish under the uncongenial influences which, apart from religion, would positively wither up all the honesties and delicacies of humble life; and therefore, that if they nauseate that gospel, which ever meets with its best acceptance, and works its most signal effects upon the poor, they abandon the poor to that very depravity into which they themselves, had they been placed among the same temptations and besetting urgencies, would assuredly have fallen. The force of native integrity may do still what it did in the days of Pagan antiquity, when it reared its occasional specimens of worth and patriotism; but it is the power of godliness, and that alone, which will reclaim our population in the length and breadth of it, and shed a moral bloom, and a moral fragrance, over the wide expanse of society. But

with many, and these too the holders of a great and ascendant influence in our land, godliness is puritanism, and orthodoxy is repulsive moroseness, and the pure doctrine of the Apostles is fanatical and disgusting vulgarity; and thus is it a possible thing, that in their hands the alone aliment of public virtue may be withheld, or turned into poison. Little are they aware of the fearful reaction which may await their natural enmity to the truth as it is in Jesus; and grievously have they been misled from the sound path, even of political wisdom, in the suspicion and intolerance wherewith they have regarded the dispensers of the word of life among the multitude. The patent way to disarm Nature of her ferocities, is to Christianize her; and we should look on all our alarms with thankfulness, as so many salutary indications, did they lead either to multiply the religious edifices, or to guide the religious patronage of our land.

But, again, it is not merely the taste of the higher orders which may be at war with the best interests of our country. It is also their example; not their example of dishonesty, not their example of disloyalty, not their example of fierce and tumultuous violence, but an example of that which, however unaccompanied with any one of these crimes in their own person, multiplies them all upon the person of the imitators—we mean the example of their irreligion. A bare example of integrity on the part of a rich man, who is freed from all temptations to the opposite, is not an effective example with a poor man, who is urgently beset at all hands with these temptations. It is

thus that the most pure and honourable example which can shine upon the poor from the upper walks of society, of what we have called the secondary and the earth-born righteousness, will never counterwork the mischief which emanates from the example that is there held forth of ungodliness. It is the poor man's sabbath which is the source of his week-day virtues. The rich may have other sources; but take away the sabbath from the poor, and you inflict a general desecration of character upon them. Taste, and Honour, and a native love of Truth, may be sufficient guarantees for the performance of duties to the breaking of which there is no temptation. But they are not enough for the wear and exposure of ordinary life. They make a feeble defence against such temptations as assail and agitate the men who, on the rack of their energies, are struggling for subsistence. With them the relative obligations hold more singly upon the religious; and if the tie of religion, therefore, be cut asunder, the whole of their morality will forthwith go into unhingement. Whatever virtue there is on the humbler levels of society, it holds direct of the sabbath and of the sanctuary; and when these cease to be venerable, the poor cease to be virtuous. You take away all their worth, when you take away the fear of God from before their eyes; and why then should we wonder at the result of a very general depravation among them, if before their eyes there should be held forth, on the part of their earthly superiors, an utter fearlessness of God? The humbler, it ought not to be expected, will follow the higher classes on the ground of social

virtue; for they have other and severer difficulties to combat, and other temptations, over which the victory would be greatly more arduous. But the humbler will follow the higher on the ground of irreligion. Only they will do it in their own style, and, perhaps, with the more daring and lawless spirit of those who riot in the excesses of a newly felt liberty. Should the merchant, to lighten the pressure of work in his counting-house, make over the arrears of his week-day correspondence to the snug and secret opportunity of the coming sabbath; —the hard wrought labourer just follows up this example in his own way, when, not to lighten, but to solace the fatigue of the six days that are past, he spends the seventh in some haunt of low dissipation. Should the man of capital, make his regular escape from the dull Sunday, and the still duller sermon, by a rural excursion, with his party of choice spirits, to the villa of weekly retreat, which by his wealth he has purchased and adorned—let it not be wondered at, that the man of drudgery is so often seen, with his band of associates, among the suburb fields and pathways of our city; or that the day which God hath commanded to be set apart for himself, should be set apart by so vast a multitude, who pour forth upon our outskirts, to the riot and extravagance of holiday. Should it be held indispensable for the accommodation of our higher citizens, that the great central lounge of politics, and periodicals, and news, be opened on sabbath to receive them; then, though the door of publick entry is closed, and with the help of screens, and hangings, and partial shutters,

something like an homage is rendered to public decency, and the private approach is cunningly provided, and all the symptoms of sneaking and conscious impropriety are spread over the face of this guilty indulgence—let us not wonder, though the strength of example has forced its way through the impotency of all these wretched barriers, and that the reading-rooms of sedition and infidelity are now open every sabbath, for the behoof of our general population. Should the high-bred city gentleman hold it foul scorn to have the raillery of the pulpit thus let loose upon his habits, or that any person who fills it should so presume to tread upon his privileges—let us no longer wonder, if this very language, and uttered, too, in this very spirit, be re-echoed by the sour and sturdy Radical, who, equal to his superior in the principle of ungodliness, only outpeers him in his expressions of contempt for the priesthood, and of impetuous defiance to all that wears the stamp of authority in the land. It is thus that the impiety of our upper classes now glares upon us from the people, with a still darker reflection of impiety back again; and that, in the general mind of our country, there is a suppressed but brooding storm, the first elements of which were injected by the men who now tremble the most under the dread of its coming violence.

It is the decay of vital godliness amongst us, that has brought on this great moral distemper. It is irreligion which palpably lies at the bottom of it. Could it only have confined its influences among the sons of wealth or of lettered infidelity, society might have been safe. But this was im-

possible; and, now that it has broke forth on the wide and populous domain of humanity, is it seen that, while a slender and sentimental righteousness might have sufficed, at least, for this present world, and among those whom fortune has shielded from its adversities, it is only by that righteousness which is propped on the basis of piety that the great mass of a nation's virtue can be upholden.

There is something in the histories of these London executions that is truly dismal.* It is like getting a glimpse into Pandæmonium; nor do we believe that, in the annals of human depravity, did ever stout hearted sinners betray more fierce and unfeeling hardihood. It is not that part of the exhibition which is merely revolting to sensitive nature that we are now alluding to. It is not the struggle, and the death, and the shrouded operator, and the bloody heads that were carried round the scaffold, and the headless bodies of men who but one hour before, lifted their proud defiance to the God in whose presence the whole decision of their spirits must by this time have melted away. It is the moral part of the exhibition that is so appalling. It is the firm desperado step with which they ascended to the place of execution. It is the undaunted scowl which they cast on the dread apparatus before them. It is the frenzied and bacchanalian levity with which they bore up their courage to the last, and earned, in return, the applause of thousands as fierce and as frenzied as themselves. It is the unquelled daring of the

* Executions of men who had conspired for the murder of the Ministers of State.

man, who laughed, and who sung, and who cheered the multitude, ere he took his leap into eternity, and was cheered by the multitude, rending the air with approbation back again. These are the doings of infidelity. These are the genuine exhibitions of the popular mind, after that Religion has abandoned it. It is neither a system of unchristian morals, nor the meagre Christianity of those who deride, as methodistical, all the peculiarities of our Faith, that will recall our neglected population. There is not one other expedient by which you will recover the olden character of England, but by going forth with the gospel of Jesus Christ among its people. Nothing will subdue them, but that regenerating power which goes along with the faith of the New Testament. And nothing will charm away the alienation of their spirits, but their belief in the overtures of redeeming mercy.

But we may expatiate too long; and let us therefore hasten to a close with a few brief and categorical announcements, which we shall simply leave with you as materials for your own consideration.

First, though social virtue, and loyalty, which is one of its essential ingredients, may exist in the upper walks of life apart from godliness—yet godliness, in the hearts of those who have the brunt of all the common and popular temptations to stand against, is the main and effective hold that we have upon them for securing the righteousness of their lives.

Secondly, the despisers of godliness are the enemies of the true interest of our nation; and it

is possible that, under the name of methodism, that very instrument may be put away which can alone recall the departing virtues of our land.

Thirdly, where godliness exists, loyalty exists; and no plausible delusion—no fire of their own kindling, lighted at the torch of false or spurious patriotism, will ever eclipse the light of this plain authoritative scripture—"Honor the King, and meddle not with those who are given to change."

But, again, such is the power of Christianity, that, even though partially introduced in the whole extent of its saving and converting influences, it may work a general effect on the civil and secular virtues of a given neighbourhood. It is thus that Christianity may only work the salvation of a few, while it raises the standard of morality among many. The reflex influence of one sacred character upon the vicinity of his residence may soften, and purify, and overawe many others, even where it does not spiritualize them. This is encouragement to begin with. It lets us perceive that, even before a great spiritual achievement has been finished, a kind of derived and moral influence may have widely and visibly spread among the population. It is thus that Christians are the salt of the earth; and we know not how few they are that may preserve society at large from falling into dissolution. It is because there are so very few among us, that our nation stands on the brink of so fearful an emergency. Were there fewer, our circumstances would be still more fearful; and if, instead of this, there were a few more, the national virtue may reattain all the lustre it ever had, even while a small fraction of

our people are spiritual men. It is in this way, that we would defend those who so sanguinely count on the power of Christianity, from the imputation of being at all romantic in their hopes or undertakings. It may take ages ere their ultimate object, which is to generalize the spirit and character of the millennium in our world, be accomplished. But if there were just a tendency to go forth among our people on the errand of Christianizing them, and that tendency were not thwarted by the enmity and intolerance of those who revile, and discourage, and set at nought all the activities of religious zeal, we should not be surprised though, in a few years, a resurrection were witnessed amongst us of all the virtues that establish and that exalt a nation.

But, lastly, alarming as the aspect of the times is, and deeply tainted and imbued as the minds of many are with infidelity; and widely spread as the habit has become of alienation from all the ordinances of religion; and sullen as the contempt may be, wherewith the hardy blasphemer of Christianity would hearken to its lessons, and eye its ministers, yet even he could not so withstand the honest and persevering good-will of one on whom there stood, visibly announced, the single-hearted benevolence of the gospel, as either to refuse him a tribute of kindliness, when he met him on the street, or as to reject, with incivility and disdain, the advances he made upon his own family. Even though he should sternly refuse to lend himself to any of the processes of a moral and spiritual operator, yet it is a fact experimentally known, that he will not refuse to

lend his children. The very man who, unpitying of himself, danced and sung on the borders of that abyss which was to ingulf him in a lake of vengeance for ever, even he had about him a part of surviving tenderness, and he could positively weep when he thought of his family. He who, had he met a minister of state would have murdered him, had he met the sabbath-school teacher who ventured across his threshold, and simply requested the attendance of his children, might have tried to bear a harsh and repulsive front against him, but would have found it to be impossible. Here is a feeling which even the irreligion of the times has not obliterated, and it has left, as it were, an open door of access, through which we might at length find our way to the landing-place of a purer and better generation. We hear much of the olden time, when each parent presided over the religion of his own family, and acted, every sabbath evening, the patriarch of Christian wisdom among the inmates of his own dwelling-place. How is it that this beautiful picture is again to be realized? Is it by persuasives, however forcible, addressed to those who never listen to them? Is it by the well-told regrets of a mere indolent sentimentalism? Is it by lifting up a voice, that will die in distance away, long ere it reach that mighty population who lie so remote from all our churches, and from all our ordinances? Are we to be interdicted from bending the twig with a strength which we do have, because others require of us to bend the impracticable tree, with a strength which we do not have? The question is a practical one, and should be met

experimentally;—how is the olden time to be brought back again? Is it by merely looking back upon it with an eye of tasteful contemplation; or, is it by letting matters alone; or, is it by breathing indignation and despite against all the efforts of religious philanthropy; or, is it by disdainful obloquy against those who do something, on the part of those that do nothing? Who, in a future generation, will be the likeliest parents for setting up the old system? the children who now run neglected through the streets, or those who, snatched from sabbath profanation, receive a weekly training among the decencies and the docilities of a religious school? It is not the experimental truth upon this question, that the amount of family religion is lessened, under such an arrangement, in those houses where it had a previous existence; but that, instead of this, it is often established in houses where it was before unknown. It is true, that unless a sabbath-school apparatus be animated by the Spirit of God, it will not bear with effect on the morals of the rising generation; but still it is by the frame-work of some apparatus or other that the Spirit works: and we deem that the likeliest and the best devised for the present circumstances of our country, which can secure, and that immediately, the most abundant strength of application on tender and susceptible childhood.*

* Had not the Sermon been extended to so great a length, its Author might have entered a little more into detail on the operation and advantage of the sabbath-school system; an omission, however, which he less regrets, as, in the work of supplying it, he would have done little more than repeated what he has published on the subject, in a more express form.

In conclusion, we may advert to a certain class of society, now happily on the decline, who are fearful of enlightening the poor; and would rather that every thing was suffered to remain in the quiescence of its present condition; and though the Bible may be called the key to the kingdom of Heaven, yet, associating, as they do, the turbulence of the people with the supposed ascent that they have made in the scale of information, would not care so to depress them beneath the level of their present scanty literature, as virtually to deny them the use and the possession of the Oracles of God. Such is the unfeeling policy of those who would thus smother all the capabilities of humble life, and lay an interdict on the cultivation of human souls,

The same remark applies to the cursory allusion that he has made on that melancholy topic, the lack of city churches, and the unwieldy extent of city parishes; he having, elsewhere, both delivered the arithmetical statements upon this topic, and also ventured to suggest the gradual remedy that might be provided for the restoration of church-going habits among the people of our great towns.

He takes the opportunity which this Note affords him, of referring the attention of his readers to a truly Christian charge, drawn up by the Methodist body in November 1819, on the subject of the political discontents which then agitated the country. It was circulated, he understands, among the members and ministers of that connexion, and ought for ever to dissolve the imagination of any alliance between the spirit of methodism, and the spirit of a factious or disaffected turbulence.

He would further observe, that the mighty influence of a sabbath on the general moral and religious character of the people, may serve to vindicate the zeal of a former generation about this one observance; a zeal which is regarded by many as altogether misplaced and puritanical. Without entering into the question, whether the Law of the Country should interfere to shield this day from outward and visible profanation, it may at least be affirmed, that the opinion of those who rate the alternations of Christianity in a land, by the fluctuating regards which, from one age to another, are rendered to the Christian Sabbath, is deeply founded on the true philosophy of our nature.

and barter away the eternity of the lower orders, for the temporal safety and protection of the higher, and, in the false imagination, that to sow knowledge is to sow sedition in the land, look suspiciously and hardly on any attempt thus to educate the inferior classes of society. It is well that these bugbears are rapidly losing their influence—and we know not how far this is due to our late venerable monarch, who, acting like a father for the good of his people, certainly did much to rebuke this cruel and unfeeling policy away from his empire. His saying, that he hoped to see the time, when there should not be a poor child in his dominions who was not taught to read the Bible, deserves to be enshrined among the best and the wisest of all the memorabilia of other days. It needs only the Saxon antiquity of Alfred, to give it a higher place than is given to all that is recorded even of his wisdom. We trust that it will be embodied in the remembrance of our nation, and be handed down as a most precious English tradition, for guiding the practice of English families; and that, viewed as the memorial of a Patriot King, it will supplant the old association that obtained between knowledge and rebellion, and raise a new association in its place, between the cause of education and the cause of loyalty. Be assured, that it is not because the people know too much, that they ever become the willing subjects of any factious or unprincipled demagogue—it is just because they know too little. It is just because ignorance is the field on which the quackery of a political impostor ever reaps its most abundant harvest. It

is this which arms him with all his superiority ; and the way eventually to protect society from the fermentation of such agitators, is to scatter throughout the mass as much of knowledge and information as will equalize the people to the men who bear them no other regard, than as the instruments of uproar and overthrow. No coercion can so keep down the cause of scholarship, as that there shall not be a sufficient number, both of educated and unprincipled men, to plot the disturbance and overthrow of all the order that exists in society. You cannot depress these to the level of popular ignorance, in a country where schools have not been universally instituted. You cannot unscholar demagogues down to the level of an untaught multitude ; and the only remaining alternative is, to scholar the multitude up to the level of demagogues. Let Scotland,* even in spite of the exhibition that she has recently made, be compared with the other two great portions of our British territory, and it will be seen, historically,

* What we regret most in our late disturbances, is, that it may serve to fomont the prejudice which still exists against the cause of popular education. It is worthy of remark, that, of late years, both in Glasgow and Paisley, this cause has been most lamentably on the decline; insomuch that we will venture to say, there is no town population in Scotland which has become so closely assimilated, in this respect, to the manufacturing population of our sister country. Any danger which may be conceived to arise from education, proceeds not from the extent of it in any one class of society, but from the inequality of it between people either of the same, or of different classes; thus rendering one part of the population more manageably subservient to any designing villany or artifice that may exist in another part. The clear and direct way of restoring this inequality, is, not to darken and degrade all, which is impracticable, but, as much as possible, to enlighten all.

as well as argumentatively, that the way to tranquillize a people is not to enthral but to enlighten them. It is, in short, with general knowledge as it is with the knowledge of Christianity. There are incidental evils attendant on the progress of both; but a most glorious consummation will be the result of the perfecting of both. Let us go forth, without restraint, on the work of evangelizing the world, and the world, under such a process, will become the blissful abode of Christian and well-ordered families. And let us go forth, with equal alacrity, to the work of spreading education among our own people; and, instead of bringing on an anticipated chaos, will it serve to grace and to strengthen all the bulwarks of security in the midst of us. The growth of intelligence and of moral worth among the people, will at length stamp upon them all that majesty of which they will ever be ambitious; and, instead of a precarious tranquillity, resting upon the basis of an ignorance ever open to the influences of delusion, will the elements of peace, and truth, and righteousness, be seen to multiply along with the progress of learning in our land.

END OF VOLUME SIXTH.

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